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"The Berlin Crisis In 1961"
U.S. Intelligence Analysis and the Presidential Decision Making Process

by

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In 1945 Truman and Churchill proposed to Stalin that British and American troops were to withdraw to the areas assigned to them as occupation zones and that the areas thus evacuated were to be occupied by the Russians; in exchange American, British, and French troops were to be sent to Berlin for the joint occupation of that city. Arrangements for free access to Berlin for the Western Allies were to be made by the Military Governors. *No written agreement was made to provide for free access to Berlin for the occupation forces of the Western Allies.*[1]

-- Konrad Adenauer

Today, as everyone can see, we have reached a new epoch in European and German history. This is an age which points beyond the status quo and the old political structures in Europe. This change is primarily the work of the people, who demand freedom, respect for their human rights and their right to be masters of their own future.[2]

-- Helmut Kohl

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[1]Konrad Adenauer, *Konrad Adenauer: Memoirs 1945-53* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1966), 141.

[2]Helmut Kohl, "A Ten-Point Program for Overcoming the Division of Germany and Europe," *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification*, eds., Harold James and Marla Stone (New York: Routeledge, 1992), 35.

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★ CHAPTER 1 ★

INTRODUCTION

Bullfight critics ranked in rows
Crowd the enormous plaza full,
But only one there is who knows,
And he's the man who fights the bull.[1]

President John F. Kennedy, as quoted by his brother, recited this piece of poetry to his staff in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. His allusion to presidential responsibility, as correct as it may be, does *not* imply that once the bullfighter has made a grave error, the critics are not capable of analyzing that error after the fact and compiling lessons for the bullfighters of the future. With this in mind, this paper contends that improper leadership and lack of bureaucratic skill on the part of the new Kennedy White House team allowed the Soviets to keep the political and diplomatic initiative throughout the Berlin Crisis in 1961 and surprise the President and his Administration with the construction of the Berlin Wall. This blundering approach to decision making subjected the U.S. and its allies to unnecessary additional risk, and permitted the establishment of a new and troublesome status quo that lasted for nearly three decades.

Intelligence analysis played a crucial role in the presidential decision making process throughout the Berlin Crisis. This paper focuses on how intelligence analysis might have aided or misled President Kennedy during the 1961 phase of the crisis, especially during the months of January to July. It also examines presidential leadership of the decision making unit. It considers excerpts of analysis and official correspondence received by the President

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[1]Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy In His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Bantam Press, 1988), 252.

and sets that advice in the proper historical context by considering its source and the time frame in which it was offered relative to the crisis. It discusses the options as President Kennedy had them presented to him in an effort to recreate the crisis environment in the mind of the reader, and to improve the *current* presidential crisis decision making process.

This paper assumes a building block approach which can be broken down into four major areas of emphasis. First, it focuses on *crisis management*. It refines the period of time analyzed relative to the Berlin Crisis as a whole, then, Chapters 2 and 3 describe the international crisis management perspective and discuss the crisis background.

Second, the paper focuses on *intelligence*. Chapter 4 establishes a definition of intelligence and then refines the area of the intelligence process on which we will concentrate, namely *analysis*, as it was presented to the President. Chapter 5 discusses the role of intelligence in crisis management. It also defines "success" and "failure" with regard to intelligence. Chapter 6 discusses what U.S. intelligence requirements were vis à vis Berlin and the Soviet Union during the 1961 phase of the crisis. President Kennedy was directly involved in determining what these requirements were through his expression of U.S. national principles and interests.

The paper's third area of emphasis is the analysts, or advisors, who were close to Kennedy and made up the decision making unit. Chapter 7 considers not only their bureaucratic position, but the personality issues as represented in historical accounts that may have biased President Kennedy one way or another as he considered the crisis options.

Finally, with the above foundation laid, Chapter 8 will examine how the 1961 phase of the crisis unfolded as a case study, made particularly interesting by the fact that this was the first time that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. squared off at the brink of nuclear war.

The Berlin Crisis in 1961 is a well-documented lesson for the crisis decision maker and should be studied closely by contemporary U.S. presidents to prepare them for the

inevitable challenges of leadership during current international crises. Because the consequences of "learning on the job" can be quite severe, it is essential that presidents study all aspects of U.S. crisis management history to avoid repetition of past mistakes. Chapter 9 concludes by discussing the successes and failures that intelligence analysis caused President Kennedy during the crisis. Some unanswered questions are offered for consideration. Finally, the paper identifies several universal lessons learned which should be applied during *any* international crisis situation faced by a U.S. president, so as to enhance current crisis management practices.

CRISIS TIME FRAME

Before getting too far, the term "Berlin Crisis" needs some clarification. The period examined has its roots in the post World War II order established in Germany in the late 1940s. Berlin, situated one hundred and ten miles inside what was the Soviet occupied zone, became the subject of bitter dispute between Western and Eastern spheres of influence. Since there was no written agreement on land access to Berlin, Stalin took the opportunity to deny that access with a blockade when it suited Soviet purposes, which were plainly to starve the population into submission. The Western allies rendered the blockade useless with the Berlin Airlift, conducted from June 1948 to May 1949. The West repeatedly stated, as in the London Declaration of 3 October 1954, "that they will treat any attack against Berlin from any quarter as an attack upon their forces and themselves." Although tensions subsided for nearly a decade, geopolitical realities and Nikita Khrushchev brought Berlin back to center stage.

Historians and archivists typically refer to the entire period from 1958 to 1962 as the crisis; a period of time connected by multiple, distinct points of tension. James Richardson says that the Berlin Crisis,

> saw many variations in intensity, but since there were significant differences between the responses of the Eisenhower and the Kennedy Administrations, it is divided into only two phases, 1958-60 and 1961-62, the periods of greatest tension being the early weeks of the first phase, the days preceding and following the Paris summit conference of May 1960, and the months between June and October 1961.[2]

It is generally accepted that although Khrushchev was still defiant regarding Berlin after the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), his speech to the East German Party Congress on 16 January 1963 may be taken as the termination of the crisis in Berlin.

This paper concentrates on the 1961 phase of the crisis, a singularly intense period during which the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. drew very close to war.

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[2]James L. Richardson, *Crisis Diplomacy: The Great Powers Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 206.

⋆ CHAPTER 2 ⋆

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE: STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing define an international crisis as, "a sequence of interactions between the governments of two or more sovereign states in severe conflict, short of actual war, but involving the perception of a dangerously high probability of war."[3] This definition is certainly appropriate in the case of Berlin in 1961. However, Kennedy's perception of the risks of war as "dangerously high" did not take shape until several months after the election. This perception was initially held only by junior officials within the Department of State.

The crisis management machinery of the U.S. executive during the Berlin Crisis was not static, but evolving. Two U.S. presidents were involved. There were several other "hot spots" besides Berlin which the U.S. leadership perceived to be boiling at the same time, most notably, Laos and Cuba. This mix of problems distracted the Kennedy Administration's focus on Berlin. Of course the common theme of all these situations was the bipolar conflict between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., with conventional and nuclear military forces functioning as the primary game pieces in "global competition."

When crises arise, national leaders are forced to make rapid decisions which will have significant short-term and long-term results. The basic task facing U.S. presidential advisors is to sort out the distractions and define the crisis options accurately, then make recommendations to the president as quickly as possible so that he or she can make the best decision. The *best* decision is one which *ideally* leads to crisis de-escalation, with a final

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[3]Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision-Making, and System Structure in International Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 6.

outcome that best serves -- or least detracts from -- U.S. national interests. Of course those interests need to be accurately defined and understood by all members of the decision making unit as well. Alternatively, the less-than-ideal decision would escalate the crisis by various means up to but not including war if the president believes that this is necessary before the crisis can be resolved with acceptable results. If the decision to go to war is made deliberately, the situation no longer fits the Snyder-Diesing definition of a crisis, but the president and his team of crisis managers have not necessarily failed. However, if miscalculation causes war to occur *unintentionally*, the crisis managers and their leader have failed by definition.

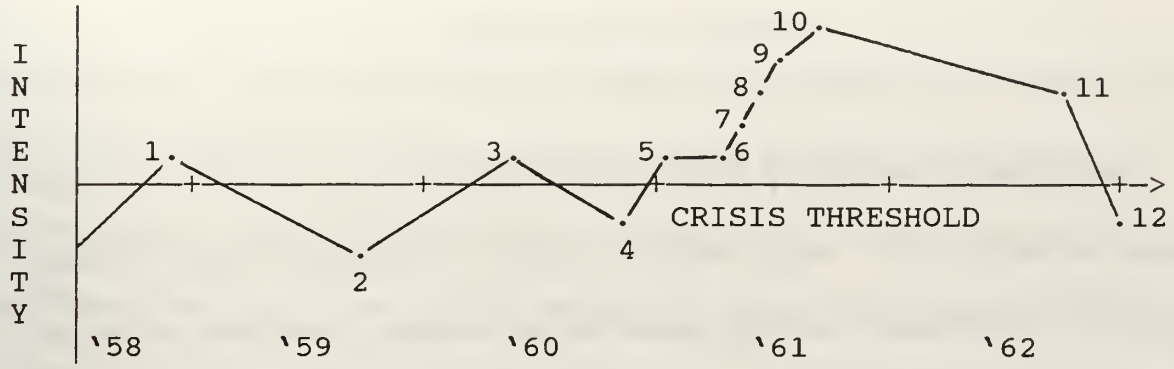
The degree of success which nations achieve during these crises is determined not only by the individual decision makers, but by the "machinery" which the decision makers have in place at the time the crisis occurs, and how they *use* that machinery. The combination of career diplomatic and military personnel with the relatively capricious nature of the elected leadership, makes for a challenging crisis management structure. Additional elements of this structure include, but are not limited to, the role of force, the role of diplomacy, the role of intelligence, and the role of communications resources (including the media). These structural elements are combined with the decision making styles of those who lead each government department involved. Together, the people and the structure comprise the palette with which the crisis outcome is painted.

In addition to the above elements, government outsiders or "consultants" -- either former government officials, retired military officers, or academics -- also may play a strong crisis management role and are sometimes deeply involved in the intelligence analysis process. We see this in our case study of Berlin. The government structures and all of the people involved, along with their respective strengths and weaknesses, can be looked at as "tools" which must be used in complex combination by a U.S. president during a crisis. No

two presidents' "crisis management toolboxes" look exactly alike, nonetheless, a mastery of each of the available tools is achievable through deliberate study and sound personnel decisions. Furthermore, this mastery is absolutely essential as presidential foreign policy decisions have far-reaching ramifications and, once made, cannot easily be rescinded. Of note, the failure to make a decision can also have great effect. Finally, one should keep in mind that in the United States, the president ultimately bears full responsibility for the outcome of a crisis -- good or bad. This is a simple leadership principle which can only add to the difficulty of crisis management.

Since no crisis takes place in a vacuum, it is important when studying a specific crisis to consider what other distractions might "clutter the radar scopes" of the decision makers. For example, in our case the attempted Bay of Pigs invasion (April 1961) had a tremendous effect on the Kennedy Administration's view of the intelligence instrument and this effect was at play as Berlin became the primary foreign policy focus as summer approached. We discuss this effect later. Generally, appreciation of circumstances external to the crisis under study will clear away the fog from which foreign policy action emerges, painting a more realistic picture of the crisis management process.

When examining the Berlin Crisis, the model put forward by Snyder and Diesing is a good place to start. The Snyder-Diesing model plots the intensity of a crisis on the vertical axis versus time on the horizontal axis. The Berlin Crisis is depicted in figure 1 on the next page using the Snyder-Diesing format. Although there are no "units" of intensity, this model helps one visualize the pressures experienced by President Kennedy and his Administration during 1961. For during crises, few factors are more significant than stress. As Richard J. Heuer has noted, "if we consider the circumstances under which accurate perception is most difficult, we find these are exactly the circumstances under which intelligence analysis is generally conducted -- dealing with highly ambiguous situations on the basis of information



Snyder-Diesing Model
The Berlin Crisis

1.	NOV	1958	- Soviet proposal for "Demilitarized Free City"
2.	SEP	1959	- Camp David meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev agreeing to talks on Berlin
3.	MAY	1960	- U-2 shoot down followed by aborted Paris Summit
4.	NOV	1960	- U.S. presidential elections
5.	JAN	1961	- Khrushchev renews separate peace treaty threat
6.	APR	1961	- Bay of Pigs invasion
7.	MAY	1961	- NATO Summit in Oslo, Norway
8.	JUN	1961	- Vienna Summit, Kennedy-Khrushchev
9.	JUL	1961	- President Kennedy's T.V. address
10.	AUG	1961	- Berlin Wall started/border closed
11.	OCT	1962	- Cuban Missile Crisis
12.	JAN	1963	- Khrushchev's speech to the East German Party Congress

figure 1[4]

that is processed incrementally under pressure for early judgment."[5] It may be useful to refer to figure 1 periodically as the crisis is discussed.

Now that we have narrowed the scope of our analysis and sketched the crisis management perspective, we move on to the crisis background.

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[4]Ibid., 15.

[5]Stan A. Taylor and Theodore J. Ralston, "The Role of Intelligence in Crisis Management," in *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management*, ed. Alexander L. George (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 404.

★ CHAPTER 3 ★

CRISIS BACKGROUND

Until the Berlin Wall went up in August of 1961, Berlin's position made it a showcase of Western technology and an "escape hatch" for millions of inhabitants of central Germany, including many well-educated and highly-skilled men and women. From 1949 until August, 1961, approximately 3.6 million refugees fled to the West. Over 1.5 million escaped by entering West Berlin.[6] Because of this, West Berlin was a constant irritant and source of embarrassment to the dubious Soviet puppet regime in the Soviet Zone of Germany.[7] In addition, Khrushchev's actions indicated that the general line of Soviet strategy with respect to Berlin and to the German question as a whole was to disrupt the Atlantic Community and destroy European integration. Berlin was a means to those ends.[8]

The crisis was initiated by a Soviet note dated 27 November 1958, addressed to West Germany as well as the three occupying powers.[9] As was the style of the Soviet Union, the note's language was not particularly graceful or diplomatic:

> ...Thus, two states came into being in Germany. Whereas in West Germany, whose development was directed by the United States, Britain, and France, a government took office the representatives of which do not conceal their hatred for the Soviet Union and often openly advertise the similarity of their aspirations to the plans of the Hitlerite aggressors, in East Germany a government was formed which has irrevocably broken with Germany's

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[6]Wolfgang Kruse, ed., *Berlin Brief* (Berlin: Presse und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, 1974), 23.

[7]*Berlin: Crisis and Challenge* (New York: German Information Center, 1972), 32.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Richardson, 206.

aggressive past.[10]

The note declared "that Western violations had rendered the occupation agreements on Berlin null and void, stating that the Soviet government intended to transfer its functions in regulating access to Berlin to East Germany, and proposing that West Berlin become a demilitarized Free City."[11] On the reunification of Germany, the note suggested that the 'two German states' enter into negotiations with the goal of setting up a confederation. Khrushchev gave a six month ultimatum. If the Western alliance had not acceded to the demands by then, the Soviet Union would sign a peace treaty with the 'German Democratic Republic' and relinquish control of access routes to Berlin to the East Germans.[12] Over the months that followed, a flurry of diplomatic exchanges and meetings ensued with less than fruitful results, but -- thankfully -- no serious miscalculations. Khrushchev allowed the six month deadline to come and go without incident as discussions between heads of state were scheduled. In late September of 1959, Premier Khrushchev and President Eisenhower met at Camp David and agreed to reopen negotiations on Berlin.

In October of 1959, Khrushchev's *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "On Peaceful Coexistence" framed the East-West conflict as a "competition." Khrushchev wrote that, "Peaceful coexistence can and should develop into peaceful competition for the purpose of satisfying man's needs in the best possible way."[13] He further stated that, "The main thing is to keep to the positions of ideological struggle, without resorting to arms in order to prove

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[10]The Government of the Soviet Socialist Republics, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1970* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 360.

[11]Richardson, 206.

[12]John Mander, *Berlin: Hostage For The West* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1962), 64.

[13]Nikita Khrushchev, "On Peaceful Coexistence," *Foreign Affairs* 38 (October 1959): 4.

that one is right."[14] He claimed that the U.S.S.R. was not interested in a new war but that, "life has shown that the North Atlantic Alliance is being gradually converted into an instrument of the German militarists, which makes it easier to carry out aggressive plans."[15] Khrushchev's controversial proposal of a separate peace treaty with Germany was summarily rejected by the Western allies for fear that it would lead to the permanent division of Berlin and ultimately, through future manipulation of land access, communist takeover of West Berlin. Khrushchev addressed this fear with the assertion that, "We resolutely reject any attempts to ascribe to the Soviet Union the intention of seizing West Berlin and infringing upon the right of the population in this part of the city to preserve its present way of life."[16]

Then, on 1 May 1960, a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance plane, en route from Pakistan to Norway, was shot down over the Soviet Union. Later that month, the Four Power Summit Meeting in Paris was aborted as Khrushchev taunted the U.S. with the aircraft wreckage before the entire world. Khrushchev insisted that the summit conference would have to be postponed six to eight months until after the U.S. elections. During the months leading up to the election, several minor disputes arose between East and West Berlin over travel regulations between the two sides of the city.

In a letter to President-Elect Kennedy dated 12 November 1960, former Ambassador to the Soviet Union (and later U.S. Ambassador at Large from January to November 1961), Averell Harriman, detailed a "blunt and frank" conversation he had with a Soviet citizen reputedly "quite close to Khrushchev." According to Harriman, the contact,

> indicated that Khrushchev wanted to make a fresh start, forgetting the U-2 incident and all of the subsequent gyrations. He expressed the opinion that

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[14]Ibid., 5.

[15]Ibid., 11.

[16]Ibid., 13.

> arms limitation and particularly nuclear control was a vital question. The Russians don't want another devastating war -- they have too much at stake. They recognize the danger of the present tensions, including the spread of nuclear weapons among other countries, unless an agreement is arrived at fairly soon.[17]

Three days later, Harriman sent another letter to Kennedy which detailed a message direct from Khrushchev. Beyond congratulating the President-to-be, Khrushchev stated that he, "hoped we could follow the line of relations that existed during President Roosevelt's time, when Mr. Harriman was Ambassador...With a return to the spirit of Soviet-American cooperation which we had during the war, not only would the people of both countries gain, but so would the people of other countries and no one would lose."[18] Harriman called Khrushchev a "realist" and recalled that during World War II, he could not "get anywhere on matters of importance without getting to Stalin himself. Undoubtedly the same situation exists today with Khrushchev."[19] On 6 January 1961, just as John F. Kennedy was about to take office, Khrushchev, in a speech to Communist party organizations in Moscow, reiterated his threat to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany.

President Kennedy had very little time to "read in" to the Berlin problem before he needed to make crucial decisions. The Harriman letters were the first "intelligence analysis" on the Soviet Union which he looked at from the presidential perspective as opposed to the perspective of a U.S. Senator. Getting to know Nikita Khrushchev necessarily took a backseat to appointing his presidential cabinet, putting his new "inner circle" in place, and forging a team that could address domestic issues as well as foreign policy concerns. In

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[17]Letter, Averell Harriman to President-Elect Kennedy, 12 November 1960, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform] Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey; Washington, D.C.: National Security Archives, 1992.

[18]Letter, Averell Harriman to President-Elect Kennedy, 15 November 1960, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[19]Ibid.

addition to the cabinet and agency heads, the President had the power to fill some 1,200 so-called Schedule C jobs.[20] Many people with multiple agendas competed for the new President's time. Poor management of information, communications, and personnel selection during the presidential transition period would become a major cause of early failure in Cuba.

The challenge in Germany was detailed in the 10 January 1961 draft of a paper entitled "The Berlin Problem in 1961" which was written by Martin J. Hillenbrand, then the Germany Desk Officer for the State Department. The paper, although not specifically intended for the President, was forwarded to the White House via Dean Rusk as a part of the transition package for the new Administration. In it Hillenbrand stated that, "there have been some disturbing signs of Soviet reluctance to believe that the West, given its divisions and its internal strains, would really prove firm in a showdown."[21] This paper provides an interesting snapshot of the U.S. State Department view of the Berlin situation in January 1961 and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

On 28 January, eight days after Kennedy took office, Dean Rusk, the new Secretary of State forwarded to the President "a brief chronology of the principal events relating to Berlin which have occurred since the ending of the first Berlin blockade in 1949." Rusk stated that, "there are indications that Mr. Khrushchev will be returning to the Berlin question in due course, perhaps soon. The chronology will give you a brief outline of the past pending a full briefing."[22] To add uncertainty to the issue for the President, Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union (April 1957 to August 1962), in

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[20]Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), 127.

[21]Memorandum, Martin Hillenbrand to Prospective Secretary Rusk, 10 January 1961, "Germany-Berlin General 1/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL, 3.

[22]Memorandum, Dean Rusk to President Kennedy, 28 January 1961, "Germany-Berlin General 1/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

a telegram from Moscow dated 30 January 1961, stated that "in non-political fields this embassy [is] chiefly [a] supplier [of] raw materials and [is] not staffed to attempt finished intelligence estimates. Nevertheless I am becoming increasingly convinced we are grossly over estimating Soviet military strength relative to ours."[23] This "unofficial" estimate was particularly interesting considering the much ballyhooed presence of a "missile gap" between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in favor of the Soviet Union. To President Eisenhower's chagrin, Kennedy had exploited the existence of a missile gap as a political issue during the campaign, only to find out after he was elected that the gap did not exist. Unfortunately for Eisenhower, the intelligence confirming the non-existence of the gap could not be discussed publicly due to the classified nature of the U-2 spy plane program.

So, the stage was set. Khrushchev appeared to want to avoid war but also seemed interested in making gains in Berlin and appeared to believe that the new U.S. administration lacked the political wherewithal to prevent him from pursuing his agenda there. The Atlantic alliance was showing signs of nervousness. Complicating matters was the beginning of the U.S. movement away from the strictly nuclear strategy of Massive Retaliation toward the expensive strategy of Flexible Response with its focus on using conventional forces first. But, the Berlin Crisis made any conventional force buildup a very sensitive issue for three reasons. First, it increased the danger of a Soviet miscalculation which might result from a misunderstanding over why the U.S. was building up its forces. Second, due to the stress it put on the Atlantic alliance as doubts of the American "nuclear guarantee" increased, Khrushchev may have been motivated to be more aggressive in Berlin hoping for muted response from disunited allies. Finally, the financial costs of a buildup were not likely to receive strong U.S. domestic support as the perception of crisis, as reflected by minimal U.S.

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[23]Telegram, Llewellyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 30 January 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

media coverage, was not widely held.

Of course Berlin was only one of many problems which Kennedy faced. His "radar screen" was cluttered with the tensions in Laos and Cuba, as well as domestic economic and civil rights problems -- to name a few. Formulating intelligence requirements, as well as collecting and analyzing information would be critical to President Kennedy in the crisis-filled year ahead. Would the President act boldly to keep the U.S.S.R. at bay and protect the prestige of the Atlantic alliance? Or would a miscalculation occur that would lead to a deadly military conflict? Nuclear weapons insured that the stakes, measured in human lives, had never been higher in all of human history.

⋆ CHAPTER 4 ⋆

INTELLIGENCE DEFINITIONS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

It is somewhat artificial to examine exclusively the intelligence element during a crisis as there is often significant redundancy of intelligence effort among the elements of crisis management structure mentioned in Chapter 2 (i.e., role of force, role of diplomacy, etc.) Analysis of any one element will necessarily include considering aspects of the others. For example, there are intelligence applications to diplomacy and the use of military force, just as there are communications challenges to diplomacy, the use of military force and intelligence. Notwithstanding this rather contrived approach, it is useful to isolate the intelligence process as much as practical to allow for its thorough examination. We do not spend significant time on the other elements of the crisis except where they overlap the intelligence analysis effort and contribute directly to the presidential decision making process. Having established a perspective of crisis management and looked at the background of the Berlin Crisis, it is useful, before examining the intelligence analysis and presidential decision making dynamic, to define some basic intelligence terminology.

"*Intelligence* is best defined as information collected, organized, or analyzed on behalf of actors or decision makers. Such information may include technical data, trends, rumors, pictures, or hardware."[24] The elements of intelligence have commonly been grouped into one of four categories: collection, analysis, covert action, or counterintelligence.[25] We

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[24]Jennifer Sims, "What is Intelligence? Information for Decision Makers," in *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads: Agendas for Reform*, eds. Roy Godson, Ernest R. May, and Gary Schmitt (Washington: Brassey's, 1995), 4.

[25]Abram N. Shulsky, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence* (Washington: Brassey's (US), 1993), 8.

look briefly at collection, covert action, and counterintelligence before focusing on analysis.

COLLECTION

Intelligence is collected from among a variety of sources, some "closed" or clandestine (human sources, or technical sources -- i.e., reconnaissance satellite/airplane photography, etc.) and some "open" (world press, government statements, academia, etc.)

Human Intelligence (HUMINT). HUMINT, although essential for forming subjective judgements of intention and analyzing technical data, can also be one of the most unpredictable forms of collection. History has borne this out with regard to the Berlin Crisis. West Berlin was a high traffic area for former East German citizens as they fled the communist regime. This afforded the Western allies many opportunities for HUMINT collection. Although Khrushchev publicly complained about Western intelligence activities underway in Berlin, the situation there also provided many opportunities for the Soviets and East Germans to pass false information to the West (counterintelligence). In fact, says Jeffrey Richelson,

> It was discovered after the fall of East Germany that most East Germans recruited by the CIA since the early 1950s had been double agents operating under the direction of the East German Ministry for State Security (MfS). In addition to allowing the identification of CIA officers, the operation also passed misleading intelligence to the CIA.[26]

The most significant HUMINT success during 1961 was the recruitment of GRU Colonel Oleg Penkovskiy. Says Richelson,

> Penkovskiy passed great quantities of material to the CIA and the British Secret Intelligence Service, including information on Soviet strategic capabilities and

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[26]Jeffrey T. Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 251.

> nuclear targeting policy. Additionally, he provided a copy of the official Soviet MRBM (Medium-Range Ballistic Missile) manual -- which was of crucial importance at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.[27]

Intelligence provided by Penkovskiy initiated some of the Special National Intelligence Estimates on Berlin during 1961 which we consider later. Penkovskiy was eventually executed by the Soviets.

Technical Intelligence (TECHINT). Made up of Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), Electronic Intelligence (ELINT), and Communications Intelligence (COMINT) among others, TECHINT was used extensively to keep policymakers informed during the Berlin Crisis. Interception of radio traffic, tapping of phonelines, and aerial photography are just a few examples of TECHINT which were exploited in Berlin.

COVERT ACTION AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

Covert action is the "attempt by a government or group to influence events in another state or territory without revealing its own involvement."[28] Counterintelligence is "the effort to protect [state] secrets, to prevent [one's] state from being manipulated, and (sometimes) to exploit the intelligence activities of others for [the] benefit [of one's own state.]"[29] Detailed information on U.S. counterintelligence and covert action in Berlin in 1961 is not readily available. However, there are indications that the Soviets were prosecuting an aggressive counterintelligence campaign against the West.

From 1953 to 1956, British and U.S. intelligence agents conducting TECHINT operations in Berlin managed to tap wires used by the Soviet military authorities. By means

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[27]Ibid., 248.

[28]Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks Or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence* (Washington: Brassey's, 1995), 2.

[29]Ibid.

of secret tunneling from a point in the American sector of Berlin, under the border between the American and Soviet sectors, they were able to intersect cables running entirely within the Soviet sector that linked the Soviet Air Force headquarters at Karlshorst with the city. The tunnel was built jointly by Britain's MI6 and the CIA. Unfortunately, George Blake, a senior MI6 officer in Berlin, was a Soviet spy. Consequently, the tunnel was compromised after about a year of operations. The intelligence collected required nearly two more years for analysis. Blake was finally tracked down, arrested, and convicted in May of 1961.[30] There may have been a Soviet deception operation in place while Blake was with the British Foreign Office in Berlin. He confessed in his trial that since 1953, he had given every important document that came into his possession to his "Soviet contact."

On 9 May 1961, West German police in Wiesbaden arrested five persons accused of being Communist agents. These arrests brought the total of such arrests in southern West Germany in two days to thirty-three.[31] The likelihood that these espionage incidents were related is probably low, however, these examples show that the possibility of deception tactics poisoning the effectiveness of U.S. HUMINT and TECHINT collection efforts in Germany was certainly plausible and probably very likely.

Despite these weaknesses in HUMINT and TECHINT, as well as the apparently successful counterintelligence campaign waged against the West by the Soviets, useful analysis of the information derived from the field of sources available was passed on to decision makers. U.S. analysts took into account the unreliability of some of the information gathered, capitalizing upon political and military experience and the refinement of analysis techniques to provide decision makers useful intelligence products. This becomes apparent when we consider the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special NIEs (SNIEs) made

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[30]Shulsky, 140.

[31]*New York Times*, 10 May 1961.

available to the Kennedy Administration. When combined with White House, other policy level correspondence and historical accounts, these estimates provide a reasonably accurate representation of the analysis used by President Kennedy in his decision making process. It is this body of analysis which we consider in some detail during our case study in Chapter 8.

ANALYSIS

What happens to the information between the collection phase and a presidential decision is just as important as the collection itself. How, and in what form this information travels from the collector, or gatherer, to the decision maker can make the difference between sound policy, and miscalculation with disastrous global consequences. Whatever the source, unprocessed or "raw" intelligence is filtered through some form of processing, or analysis, on its way to the decision maker.

Says Shulsky, "In intelligence matters, analysts can rarely be completely confident of the solidity of the foundations on which they are building; they must remain open to the possibility that their evidence is misleading."[32] Analysis has always been a tricky business. The pressure to consider all the possibilities and then make predictions has traditionally been very high. When added to the possibility that the raw data may be incorrect, the frustration analysts face is quite understandable. There is a sense that no matter how competent the analyst, he or she does not have complete control of his or her own fate. In an effort to keep the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the decision maker, analysts within the professional Intelligence Community (IC) have avoided giving opinions and have leaned toward presenting known data. Douglas J. MacEachin presents the following mission statement for analysts in his article, "The Tradecraft of Analysis": to "Provide U.S.

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[32]Shulsky, 197.

policymakers with information and analysis *they* need to carry out *their* mission of formulating and implementing U.S. national security policy."[33]

SOURCES OF ANALYSIS

Today, the IC is usually described as containing several agencies or parts of agencies. Commonly accepted among these are the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA); the National Security Agency (NSA); the various branches of the Armed Services; portions of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), specifically the counterintelligence sections of the FBI; certain bureaus or offices within the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Energy; as well as usually unnamed offices for the collection of specialized national foreign intelligence.[34]

During the Berlin Crisis, the entire IC participated in the production of written NIEs and SNIEs much as it does today. NIEs were produced on a scheduled basis and SNIEs were produced on demand to meet specific intelligence needs. The final documents were submitted to policy makers by the Director of Central Intelligence. They were prepared by the CIA and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and Joint Staff. The U.S. Intelligence Board (USIB) also concurred on these estimates. The USIB representatives generally included the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; the Director of the National Security

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[33] Douglas J. MacEachin, "The Tradecraft of Analysis," in *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads: Agendas for Reform*, 65.

[34] Taylor and Ralston, 409.

Agency; the Assistant Director, FBI; and finally, a Representative to the USIB from the Atomic Energy Commission.

In 1961, as is the case today, the President also received analysis from several other individuals in addition to those in the IC. These others were not bent on avoidance of policy suggestion. To the contrary, it was the role of the individuals advising at the policy level to do just that: convert analysis into policy recommendations for the President. Of note in this regard are the advisors whom Kennedy chose for his inner circle who ultimately became part of a combination of sources of analysis, which found its locus *outside* of the traditional IC. This combination of sources was made up of a distinct group of personalities which created a unique intelligence analysis dynamic.

Personal relationships and personal leadership style have always been an integral part of how a U.S. president reaches decisions. President Kennedy was no exception. The personal opinion a president holds of the person whose signature appears on the bottom of a point paper, intelligence estimate, or other document will add or subtract credibility from that document as a useful piece of information from which the president must glean information to make a decision. The credibility of the agency or department to which an individual belongs may also add or subtract from this personal element. Archival documents alone cannot reveal this "credibility factor."

In Chapters 7 and 8, we examine this personal dynamic as it played out in a unique series of events which occurred within the first several months of the Kennedy presidency. As far as *events* are concerned, without question, the Bay of Pigs invasion and Kennedy's reaction to its outcome had a most profound effect upon the way information was managed on its way to, and *by*, the President heading into the summer of 1961. Because of the failure at the Bay of Pigs, the CIA incurred a huge loss of prestige which arguably affected the role which the CIA played in the Berlin Crisis throughout the remainder of that year.

Add the unique stress caused by the extremely high stakes of the crisis, to the friction of personal relationships, and one can see that the movement from intelligence theory to practice was full of unexpected surprises. In the following excerpt, Eleanor Lansing Dulles expressed her frustration over the way in which the process unravelled in Berlin:

> Intelligence with its emphasis on gathering facts from scattered sources is not always what the word implies. Interpretation of bits and pieces of gossip, military deployment, economic changes, movement of material and blustering hostile leaders, lags behind reporting. Usually the interpretation is by officials somewhat removed from the raw data. Sometimes they have little feeling for the atmosphere and the sentiment which dictates the command decision. In Washington the tasks are widely distributed. By the time the story is told and the conclusions brought to the top leaders through the channels of interagency consultations, hours and days which may be crucial have elapsed. Until there is a way of moving from the outside perimeters of watch posts to the inner councils of decision in minutes and not days, the security of the nation will be precarious. Even the Cuban missile crisis came slowly into focus. In Berlin in 1961 the intelligence reading came after the communist move.[35]

Unfortunately, this frustration expressed by Eleanor Lansing Dulles twenty-five years ago still haunts the U.S. executive today, despite modern technology.

Following this discussion of crisis management and intelligence, we now combine the two topics and discuss the role of intelligence in crisis management.

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[35]Eleanor Lansing Dulles, *The Wall: A Tragedy In Three Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 26.

★ CHAPTER 5 ★

THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Crisis management poses particularly difficult intelligence challenges. Due to actual and perceived time pressure, intelligence machinery must be exercised in the most efficient and precise manner possible so as to support the President in defining his or her crisis options. It must then be used to track the execution of the selected option and the results of that decision to provide a "feedback loop" to gage success or failure and to determine the need for followup action. Due to the pace of events in an international crisis, as opposed to periods of lower tensions, the intelligence *process* becomes a repetitious *cycle* which must be deftly managed by the President. The President does this by asking probing questions and getting the most out of every member of the team through responsible delegation of presidential authority. This chapter draws heavily upon the article by Taylor and Ralston entitled "The Role of Intelligence in Crisis Management," which was published as a chapter in Alexander George's book, *Avoiding War: Problems in Crisis Management*.

Intelligence posed significant problems for the new Kennedy Administration in early 1961. According to Taylor and Ralston, "the terrain between the policy-making apparatus and the intelligence agencies has been a major battleground in a bureaucratic war, the outcome of which shapes the role of intelligence in crisis management."[36] They go on to say that, "this battle has dominated the attention of every new administration during both its transition into office and its early days in office."[37] Unfortunately for the Kennedy Administration, this battle first played itself out on a beach in Cuba.

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[36]Taylor and Ralston, 395.

[37]Ibid.

As the Intelligence Community (IC) is primarily staffed by career personnel, it will *usually* provide much of the institutional memory of regional political situations for the president, although he or she may venture elsewhere for this information, as Kennedy did with Berlin. The required regional knowledge usually does not exist in depth at the presidential level.[38] A former senior member of the Carter National Security Council staff articulated this problem very clearly: "the most staggering thing was walking into the White House during our first major crisis, wondering what to do, and then all of a sudden realizing that there are no rules, no books, and no procedures. One of your first thoughts is to ask the President; but the President doesn't know; he only knows what the staff tells him."[39]

In the precrisis, or early stages of a crisis, intelligence is the most general as the IC usually does not have its assets focused on the region of interest. As the crisis unfolds, "Ambiguity and uncertainty reign, there is a dearth of real information, and speculation runs rampant."[40] Ideally, with skill and good timing, a rapid "ramping up" process occurs which keeps the President updated and facilitates good decisions which will lead to the de-escalation of the crisis with positive results.

INTELLIGENCE SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Causes of crisis management intelligence failure include communication problems, bureaucratic problems, psychological impediments, as well as ideological and political obstacles.[41] Generally, *success* begins by correctly defining the intelligence requirements. What information do the decision makers need? Next, the proper information gatherer is

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[38]Ibid., 396.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., 397.

[41]Ibid.

assigned and conducts the collection. The raw information is processed or analyzed as required, then passed on in a timely fashion to the decision maker, ultimately for the purposes of our case study, President Kennedy. The same raw information will have been analyzed multiple times by lower level decision makers before its presentation to the president. Next, the president, along with his advisors, examines the intelligence products and makes decisions.

Intelligence *failure*, generated by one of the causes listed above, can reveal itself in a number of ways throughout the process. First, initial intelligence requirements may not be correctly identified. Second, once identified, the collection might not be conducted properly, or at all. Third, even proper collection may be negatively affected by counterintelligence techniques used by the adversary. Fourth, once collected, the information may be poorly analyzed or not converted into a useful product for the president. Finally, the information and recommendations may not be passed to the decision makers in a timely manner, or at all.

Some of the biggest communications problems include overcompartmentation, and information overload. Overcompartmentation occurs when intelligence information is classified into overly narrow categories, usually on the basis of collection sources. This can lead to the President not having key intelligence information during a crisis. For example, during the Bay of Pigs invasion, "analysts who had information about internal Cuban conditions that would have challenged some of the optimistic assumptions of the plan were kept from influencing those who were planning the invasion."[42]

Information overload occurs when critical bits of intelligence information have been collected, however, they are hidden among large amounts of distracting information and analysts may not find them during crisis operations due to time constraints.[43] Also, if the

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[42]Ibid., 399.

[43]Ibid.

president is inundated with intelligence products, "unfiltered" by his or her staff, the likelihood is high that he or she may miss the critical "piece of the puzzle."

Bureaucratic problems include budgetary constraints, competition between IC agencies (or even *within* agencies), strict and lengthy chains of command which impede information flow, creation of *ad hoc* procedures during crises, and the tendency of intelligence analysts to emphasize worst case scenarios.[44] In Berlin, the focus on the worst case scenario -- blocked access leading to general war -- caused the IC to lose its focus on the possibility that the U.S.S.R. might be searching for a way to change the status quo *without* triggering military conflict with NATO, which is exactly what they were doing. Also, the creation of *ad hoc* procedures were prevalent, not just because of the crisis, but because of the belief held by the Administration that the IC, especially the CIA, was unreliable. At a minimum, CIA advice was viewed skeptically as the agency operated in the crippled state caused by the taint of the post-Bay of Pigs investigation.

Psychological impediments are described by Taylor and Ralston: "Existing beliefs and mental images tend to screen out or dilute the significance of new information, and pressures to conform to prevailing policy assumptions cause distortions in the evaluation of new information."[45] Crisis-induced stress can cause analysts and decision makers to "focus almost myopically on the latest piece of information."[46] It can cause them to fall prey to the psychological requirement for "cognitive consistency," that is the tendency to see what they expect to see and sometimes what they want to see. This is closely related to the tendency to believe that things will remain as they are. Also, the image of the hostile opponent can have a distortive effect on assessments of opposition intent and will usually shape perceptions of

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., 404.

[46]Ibid.

the opponent's capabilities.[47]

Ideological and political obstacles can also come into play, "when intelligence judgments are altered to suit the views of those receiving them or to further the interests of those reporting them." According to Taylor and Ralston,

> In his recounting of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Robert Kennedy reported that "personalities change when the President is present, and frequently even strong men make their recommendations on the basis of what they believe the President wishes to hear. More blatant, however, were the efforts Kennedy also observed by senior policy makers to "exclude certain individuals from participating in a meeting with the President because they held a different point of view."[48]

Even if none of these obstacles comes into play, the entire responsibility for crisis management ultimately rests upon the President. Say Taylor and Ralston, "the most fragile link in the intelligence process occurs after the collection, analysis, and production stages are complete. Then senior policy makers must decide which of the large array of intelligence products they will read, believe, and act upon."[49] In other words, if the President makes the wrong decision despite good intelligence, no intelligence failure occurs but the crisis outcome is still negative.

In the case of Berlin in 1961, the direct cause and effect relationship between intelligence failure and general war was sobering, but the Administration's positive exploitation of the IC was lacking. In the nuclear charged environment of the day, the weight of foreign policy decisions could not have rested more heavily upon the shoulders of President Kennedy and his inner circle of advisors, but the odds for intelligence success were not heavily weighted in favor of the Administration.

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[47]Ibid., 405-406.

[48]Ibid., 407.

[49]Ibid., 400.

⋆ CHAPTER 6 ⋆

U.S. INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS DURING THE CRISIS

Defining and sorting out the complex decision options available to the U.S. in Berlin was a challenging task made more emotionally intense by the potentially dire consequences of a bad decision. The Kennedy Administration was by no means lacking in intelligence machinery for determining just what the options were, or advice on which option was best and how to proceed after having made any particular choice. In fact, just the opposite was true. The Administration had so much to work with that it was overwhelmed. The problem was that some of the intelligence machinery was broken, and in some cases -- particularly with regard to negotiations -- none of the options were good. Added to this was the confusion of the transition to the presidency, inexperience, political pressures, and occasional lapses of good judgment. All in all, the outlook was rather grim.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the initial burden carried by the Administration during the crisis was to define the intelligence requirements before the machinery could work. Intelligence requirements were based upon four specific needs: first, the requirement for institutional knowledge of the record of history to be understood at the presidential level; second, the need for a sound consensus among U.S. policymakers as to what comprised U.S. principles and interests with regard to Berlin; third, the need for an accurate assessment of current Soviet and East German capabilities and intentions; fourth, and finally, the need for a dependable information "feedback" feature which would allow decision makers -- once a particular option had been analyzed, chosen, and executed -- to monitor the Soviet response, to insure it matched the predicted model, and to update intelligence requirements.

The record of Soviet actions in Berlin since World War II provided a data base from which intelligence analysts might predict future Soviet actions, as well as Soviet *re*actions to

U.S. moves. U.S. civilian and military analysts, both inside and outside of the Intelligence Community (IC), with access to this information had to study it carefully to determine decision option recommendations. They also needed to present the germane portions of this historical information to the President in a concise, efficient manner.

The second need upon which a proper definition of intelligence requirements was based -- policymaker consensus on U.S. principles and interests -- had been met in effect by a statement issued by the Department of State on 20 December 1958. Entitled "Statement Setting Forth the Legal Right of the United States to Access to and Presence in Berlin," this document had its basis in fundamental questions of international law. The document summarized all applicable agreements and their historical context. Martin J. Hillenbrand contends that although this document was somewhat lengthy, study of it reveals that U.S. vital interests in Berlin were limited to: 1) the security of U.S. forces in West Berlin; 2) access to West Berlin; and 3) the security of the inhabitants of West Berlin. Circumstances for military intervention for *any* other reason were not defined in the statement and so arguably fell outside of U.S. vital interests.[50]

The third specific need upon which intelligence requirements were based was an accurate confirmation of Soviet, and to a lesser extent East German, capabilities and intentions under the high pressure of the crisis environment -- despite possible counterintelligence efforts by the Soviets. This confirmation had qualitative and quantitative aspects. The quantitative side entailed the count of military equipment (i.e., the "order of

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[50]Martin J. Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997. At the time of the crisis, Hillenbrand was the Germany Desk Officer at the State Department and worked closely with Foy D. Kohler, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. He went on to become the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary in 1967, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in 1969, and the U.S. Ambassador to Germany in 1972. After retiring from the Foreign Service, he worked at a private international consulting firm in Paris. He currently works at the Center for Global Policy Studies at the University of Georgia in Athens.

battle"). Colonel Penkovskiy contributed to this confirmation to a great degree, as did the U-2 spy plane program.

Quantitative analysis, although never easy, is less difficult than qualitative analysis and estimating intentions. Much more delicate and uncertain, the variable of personalities complicates matters tremendously. For example, how might one have predicted Khrushchev's actual agenda as opposed to his rhetoric? Even Penkovskiy (and others) could only postulate. There were many clues, but the President expected -- and needed -- clear and precise answers with which to make confident decisions. These types of answers were illusive but constitute the crux of our case study in Chapter 8.

The fourth need upon which intelligence requirements were based was the sources of intelligence "feedback." The ability to gage Soviet reaction relied heavily upon the IC. Unfortunately, the feedback loop of the intelligence cycle was still weak in the summer of 1961, despite the lessons of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The surprise and disarray with which the Administration reacted to the construction of the Berlin Wall in August is evidence of this weakness. We also examine this more closely in Chapter 8.

The four needs listed above fostered the requirement for the answers to several more specific questions, the answers to which would, in essence, dictate U.S. intelligence requirements: 1) What did President Kennedy believe were the United States' national interests in Berlin?; 2) What were the U.S. options?; 3) Under what circumstances, if any, should the U.S. have committed conventional forces to combat over Berlin?; 4) Under what circumstances, if any, should the U.S. have used nuclear weapons (tactical and/or strategic)?; 5) What were the short-term and long-term effects of each U.S. option?; 6) What were the likely Soviet reactions to each option?; 7) What were the Soviet Union's interests, specifically, what might have made Khrushchev view general war as a "reasonable" option in the case of Berlin?; 8) What were likely allied reactions to each U.S. option?; and, 9) What

combination of crisis option and Soviet reaction was the most preferable?

A note here on historical context is appropriate. As mentioned earlier, U.S. actions in Berlin, in a large part, prompted the six year debate which would lead to a Western alliance strategy shift from Massive Retaliation to Flexible Response. Although it would not become operational policy within NATO until January of 1968, Flexible Response would be driven by the realization of the need for conventional force options in Germany to avoid the decision between 'suicide and surrender.'[51] This was an incredibly significant sea-change in national security philosophies which was made during tense, tenuous circumstances. The ambiguous circumstances which marked the conclusion of the crisis in Berlin would come to be defended as a vital element of NATO strategy.[52] Despite the ultimate success of Flexible Response in keeping the allies content and apparently deterring the Warsaw Pact, the uncertainty caused by the strategy debate in 1961 only contributed to the intensity of the crisis.

Richardson states that the "fundamental premise of the Western response which was to be articulated by the Kennedy Administration [was] that the West should not insist on upholding the status quo in every detail, but should define the essential interests on behalf of which it was prepared to incur the ultimate risk."[53] The ultimate risk, of course, was general war, including the strong likelihood of the exchange of nuclear weapons.

After much consideration of the ideas presented to him in a heavy stream of memoranda screened through McGeorge Bundy (Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs), and many personal consultations, the President publicly expressed what he believed were the essential American interests in Berlin in his televised speech to the nation

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[51]Jane E. Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO's Debate Over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 3.

[52]Ibid., 1.

[53]Richardson, 206.

of 25 July 1961: a continued military presence in West Berlin, unimpeded access for those forces and the security and viability of West Berlin itself, a "duty to mankind to seek a peaceful solution," and the need to continue negotiations. As expected, it was the military measures, which dominated the American public's perception of the response.[54] The intelligence requirements were in effect defined by whatever was required to support the interests expressed in the 1958 statement as reiterated and augmented by Kennedy. The intelligence requirements to support the military measures were straight forward. The intelligence analysis requirements to support the political decisions (i.e., negotiations), and estimate responses to U.S. moves, were not nearly as clear cut.

President Kennedy's concise statement of America's interests in Berlin belied the intense intelligence effort made by his inner circle, outside advisors, the IC, and military contingency planners to provide him with the cogent, succinct analysis required to make the decisions necessary to guide the country through the crisis. Before Vienna, the analysis was good but sparse, and given little attention. After Vienna, the amount of analysis was so overwhelming that it was difficult to pick through all the paper to make a decision. As Hillenbrand asserts, it was a case of "too much individual brilliance."[55]

The President's actions are revealed in Chapter 8 and, by following the decision making process, one will see just how close the U.S. came to general war. In short, President Kennedy believed that Berlin was critical to the credibility of the Western alliance. He believed that the U.S. needed to build up conventional forces in the area to expand military options to encompass more than just nuclear weapons. If the Soviets initiated moves to block access to Berlin, and the Western allies were unable to counter the block, Kennedy was prepared to take military action with full knowledge that this action might escalate

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[54]Richardson, 211.

[55]Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

uncontrollably to the nuclear level. So, although the official strategy of the alliance was still Massive Retaliation, Kennedy chose a *de facto* Flexible Response option.

Considering the weight of these decisions, the shoddy work done by the Administration, especially between the inauguration and the construction of the Berlin Wall in mid August, was reprehensible. Let us examine President Kennedy's intelligence analysis support team and see where the problems originated.

⋆ CHAPTER 7 ⋆

THE FINAL INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS: THE BERLIN CRISIS DECISION MAKING UNIT

Having defined what Kennedy came to believe were the U.S. interests in Berlin, we now turn to some of the individuals who provided analysis and advice to the President in 1961. A fascinating collection of actors, these men each provided unique color to the drama that unfolded over Berlin. More importantly however, these men -- along with the President -- made up the decision making unit during the crisis. Historical evidence shows that the President's weak efforts at team building and leadership allowed personality conflicts among these men to detract from professional interaction thus jeopardizing the U.S. unnecessarily during the Berlin Crisis, and allowing the Soviets to keep the political and diplomatic initiative throughout 1961.

This discussion by no means covers all of the people who contributed to the analysis that Kennedy used. It briefly describes only the major Berlin Crisis participants with particular attention paid to those advisors closest to the President: his White House staff, the Director of the CIA, the Secretary of State, ambassadors, the Secretary of Defense, as well as key government outsiders like Henry Kissinger and Dean Acheson. It is not the point of this discussion to make a qualitative judgment of each person's professional abilities. Rather, the following analysis shows how each member of the decision making unit related to President Kennedy and in what way each contributed intelligence analysis to the Presidential decision making process.

It is very important for the reader to recognize that although there was a high number of astute thinkers in mid-grade positions at State, CIA, Defense and elsewhere, those loyal individuals who had the President's ear -- and who he *trusted* -- were the ones who

influenced presidential decisions. These individuals were the final "analysts" to handle intelligence information before it was presented to the President. Recognize that the most superlative piece of analysis, presented to the President by someone who had "fallen from grace," or who was never really an insider, was not given the same level of attention that a more dubious piece of analysis was which was presented to the President by a loyal, trusted advisor. The cover letter or cover memo attached by his staff also heavily influenced the President's perception of any written analysis which came across his desk. This personal dynamic was critical to the intelligence analysis process at the presidential level, and remains critical today.

Other than President Kennedy's White House staff and new appointees, the intelligence instrument used by the Administration remained the same for Kennedy immediately after his inauguration as it had been for his predecessor, Dwight D. Eisenhower. For political reasons, Kennedy chose to keep both CIA Director Allen Dulles and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover on the team -- a part of what Arthur Schlesinger called "the strategy of reassurance."[56] Despite recommendations to replace Dulles and Hoover made by Kennedy's campaign team, no major changes were made in the way that information was handled in the Intelligence Community (IC) until after the failed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in April. This watershed event brought the intelligence process to its knees, subjecting it to heavy scrutiny and prompting significant change in the midst of the crisis in Berlin. The decision making process changed dramatically again after Vienna as Kennedy realized the gravity of the situation in Berlin. Five categories of advisors will be examined: the White House staff, the CIA, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and consultants.

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[56]Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994), 511.

WHITE HOUSE STAFF

The people closest to the President in the intelligence flow were the White House staff. Members of the staff were Kennedy's political friends who tended to know how the President thought about issues and most likely were even expected by the President to act on his behalf without prior consultation under certain circumstances. In general, a President picks "Special Assistants" whom he trusts implicitly, without reservation, not only for their analytical capabilities but for their like-mindedness in approaching issues, and their personal loyalty. However, effective presidents will surround themselves with lieutenants who tell them the truth, not necessarily what they would like to hear. Candor, a rare quality, can turn the ship of state before it becomes *in extremis*. But candor was not always present among the members of the U.S. Berlin Crisis decision making unit. With that said, it is reasonable that Kennedy's White House staff should be studied to discover what part it played in the preparation and handling of intelligence analysis on Berlin prior to its ending up in the Oval Office "in basket."

These individuals were no doubt asked by the President, "what did you think about the such and such paper?" or, "what do you think about Under Secretary so and so?" The answers to these questions about the personal dynamic are not found in the archives but appear in personal accounts written later which we weigh against the archival documents and the historical record to gain insight into the presidential decision making process.

McGeorge Bundy. One of the closest, if not *the* closest, advisors to Kennedy on a continual basis as the summer of 1961 approached was the President's National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy. Bundy screened most of the Berlin-related material coming into the Oval Office and, consequently, had a tremendous influence over who and what Kennedy saw and used in this regard to make his decisions during the crisis. According to David Halberstam, in his book, *The Best and the Brightest*, Bundy's job was,

> Keeping the papers moving, reminding the President when a decision was coming up, occasionally helping to channel a promising young man in State who might give a slightly different viewpoint to the President, protecting the President against people who wanted his time but were not worthy of it, making sure that people who needed his time got it, learning quickly what the President's tastes, needs, reservations were, always moving things. In his own words, the traffic cop.[57]

"Mac" Bundy was one of President Kennedy's young superstars who had risen to the top at an early age. Dean of the College at Harvard University at thirty-four years of age, he was roasted by a Yale colleague with the following limerick:

> A proper young prig, McGeorge Bundy,
> Graduated from Yale on Monday
> But he shortly was seen
> As Establishment Dean
> Up at Harvard the following Sunday.[58]

Bundy served as an officer in the Army during World War II. He worked on some of the post-war details of the Marshall Plan, was a political analyst for the Council on Foreign Relations, and wrote speeches for John Foster Dulles in his New York Senate campaign. Halberstam characterized Bundy as "dashing, bright, brittle, the anti-bureaucratic man, the anti-conventional man." He described the personal relationship between Bundy and President Kennedy as something that transcended politics:

> Mac Bundy was a good and true Republican... and had voted twice for Eisenhower, but in the late fifties he began to forge a relationship with Jack Kennedy, a relationship in which Arthur Schlesinger [active in the 1960 presidential campaign and Special Assistant to the President from 1961 to 1964] served as the main intermediary. Bundy and Kennedy got on well from the start, both were quick and bright, both hating to be bored or to bore, that was almost the worst offense a man could commit, to bore. Rationalists, both of them, one the old Boston Brahmin, the other the new Irish Brahmin, each anxious to show to the other that he was just a little different from the knee-

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[57] David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 61.

[58] Ibid., 57.

jerk reactions of both his background and his party.[59]

Up until the Bay of Pigs invasion (17-20 April 1961), President Kennedy ran something of an "open door policy." That is, he did not have Oval Office visitors strictly "screened" through a key aide. Robert Kennedy, the President's younger brother and U.S. Attorney General, in a February 1965 interview with Arthur Schlesinger, stated that, "the Bay of Pigs and our investigation [after it] stimulated some more-clear-cut lines of authority. Everybody was going to President Kennedy directly. That was a mistake. Mac Bundy should have had more primary responsibility to people reporting through him and with him."[60] President Kennedy corrected this situation almost immediately after the invasion by adjusting his working relationship with Bundy. Of Bundy, Robert Kennedy stated that President Kennedy thought he was "competent," and Robert Kennedy described him as "brilliant" although he also characterized him as occasionally indecisive.[61]

Indecisiveness is not a desirable characteristic of crisis managers and may have limited Bundy at times from being as strong an influence on the President *during crises* as he might otherwise have been. Nonetheless, Bundy had a tremendous effect on the intelligence analysis which President Kennedy used. Said Halberstam,

> Mac was a terrific memo writer, facile, brief and incisive. It was not, as publication of documents would later prove, exactly something which would make the literary world envious, but to be a good memo writer in government was a very real form of power. Suddenly everyone would be working off Bundy's memos, and thus his memos guided the action, guided what the President would see.[62]

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[59]Ibid., 59.

[60]Guthman and Shulman, 12.

[61]Ibid., 418-419.

[62]Halberstam, 61-62.

Bundy, as the President's point man, could have done more to support the efficiency of the presidential decision making process. His lack of professional rapport with the State Department and CIA ultimately reduced the effectiveness of key tools in the President's "crisis management toolbox."

Theodore C. Sorensen. Ted Sorensen was John F. Kennedy's closest aide throughout the latter's political career and from January 1961 to January 1964, he served as Special Counsel to the President. Although he dealt primarily in domestic policy, he was consulted frequently during foreign policy decisions after the Bay of Pigs. Said Robert Kennedy,

> Sorensen's primary responsibility was domestic matters, but it was like me: My primary responsibility was domestic matters -- I mean, the Department of Justice -- but when the final decision or decisions were going to be made on some foreign policy matters which had an important effect, we would be brought in just to give our views or raise questions.[63]

Early predictions were that Sorensen and Bundy would clash, but this never occurred in a significant way. Arthur Schlesinger described Sorensen: "Self-sufficient, taut and purposeful, he was a man of brilliant intellectual gifts, jealously devoted to the President and rather indifferent to personal relations beyond his own family."[64] Schlesinger went on to contrast Sorensen with Kennedy:

> Of Sorensen and Kennedy themselves, two men could hardly have been more intimate and, at the same time, more separate. They shared so much -- the same quick tempo, detached intelligence, deflationary wit, realistic judgment, candor in speech, coolness in crisis -- that, when it came to policy and speeches, they operated nearly as one.
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> ...speeches, of course, assured [Sorensen] an entry into foreign policy at the critical points. No one at the White House worked harder or more

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[63]Guthman and Shulman, 251.

[64]Schlesinger, 208.

carefully; Kennedy relied on no one more...[65]

As the debate over what to do in Berlin heated up, Sorensen became directly involved. He drafted a memorandum summing up the White House position after Dean Acheson and Lyndon Johnson began to call for the proclamation of a national emergency after Vienna. Sorensen drafted the President's 25 July television address on Berlin which made a strong statement to Khrushchev about the U.S. position: the intent to increase the defense budget and activate military reserve units. This speech and Khrushchev's reaction to it took the crisis to a new, higher level.

Maxwell D. Taylor. On 22 April 1961, two days after the Bay of Pigs debacle, Kennedy called retired General Maxwell Taylor (Army Chief of Staff from 1955 to 1959) to come to Washington and investigate the CIA role in the failed Cuban invasion. General Taylor had resigned during the Eisenhower Administration due to his opinions of military strategy which diverged from the current line of thought. At age fifty-nine, he had begun to settle into a job as the president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, as it turned out, this was a short-lived "career". Taylor accepted Kennedy's invitation and became the Special Military Assistant to the President.[66]

Although he had no prior personal relationship with the General, President Kennedy had been strongly influenced by Taylor's book, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, which touted the failure of the defense strategy called Massive Retaliation and described the need for a new approach called Flexible Response. Coming on the heels of the Eisenhower presidency, during which he was seen as a strategic dissident, Taylor and his passion for defense reform was highly controversial. Said Taylor in his book,

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[65]Ibid.

[66]Grose, 531.

> the question may well be raised as to whether such a National Military Program of Flexible Response is really practicable. It is if we will act promptly. Changes must be made both within the Department of Defense and in the national attitude and behavior. To start with, the attic of the Department of Defense has need of thorough housecleaning to throw out many outmoded concepts, illusions, shibboleths, and fallacies.[67]

Taylor's ideas struck home with Kennedy, who as early as 1954, while leading the fight in the Senate to preserve the Army after the Korean War, had said, "Our reduction of strength for resistance in so-called brushfire wars, while threatening atomic retaliation, has in effect invited expansion by the Communists in areas such as Indochina through those techniques which they deem not sufficiently offensive to induce us to risk the atomic warfare for which we are so ill prepared defensively."[68]

Initially, the President and his brother were hoping to name Taylor as the replacement for Allen Dulles at CIA, but the General was not interested. He was, however, content to become the President's Special Military Assistant and chair the investigation into the CIA failure in Cuba.[69]

Maxwell Taylor's confluence of strategic ideas with the President would lead to his being pulled in on many decisions which transcended strictly military issues. According to Robert Kennedy, it "was sensitive, but every decision that the President made on foreign policy was cleared through Maxwell Taylor."[70]

Robert Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy, although not *technically* a member of the President's White House staff, naturally took on a personally interactive role because he was

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[67]Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 165.

[68]Schlesinger, 310.

[69]Grose, 532-533.

[70]Guthman and Shulman, 255.

President Kennedy's brother. While serving as the U.S. Attorney General, Bobby Kennedy was considered by his brother for a number of other positions in the government at various times, including the Director of the CIA after the Bay of Pigs debacle. Said Bobby Kennedy,

> The fact was that we had grown up together and had gone through all these things. I would be involved. Each person had sort of a different role... I'd see him when he'd have a Cabinet meeting or a National Security Council meeting or a meeting on other matters, we'd usually have a talk. That might be maybe once or twice a day or several times a week -- whatever it might be. I knew what was going on.[71]

The first few months of the Administration, Bobby Kennedy was involved with the press and putting presidential appointees into place. After the Bay of Pigs, he became more active in White House affairs. Arthur Schlesinger wrote of Bobby Kennedy's role outside of domestic affairs: "Especially in foreign affairs, if a good idea was going down for the third time in the bureaucratic sea, one turned more and more to Bobby to rescue it. His distinctive contribution was to fight unremittingly for his brother's understanding that foreign policy was not a technical exercise off in a vacuum but the expression of a nation's internal policy and purpose."[72]

Of particular interest regarding intelligence analysis was Bobby Kennedy's personal relationship with Georgi Bolshakov, an employee of the Russian embassy. Speaking of this relationship, Kennedy said,

> Most of the major matters dealing with the Soviet Union and the United States were discussed and arrangements were made between Georgi Bolshakov and myself. He was Khrushchev's representative, so we used to meet maybe once every two weeks. We used to go over all this: whether the United States would stand up. We went through Berlin. We were reasonably hopeful about what would happen on the inspection of nuclear weapons, because he had indicated to me in a meeting one Sunday morning that they would permit, I

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[71] Ibid., 422.

[72] Schlesinger, 701-702.

think, up to twenty inspection sites in Russia. Of course, when they got to Vienna, they wouldn't agree.[73]

Kennedy was introduced to Bolshakov by an American journalist. For some unknown reason, the Soviets seemed to want to bypass their own ambassador to the U.S. except for matters of routine importance. Khrushchev communicated directly with the President through Bobby Kennedy's relationship with Bolshakov. They talked about whether or not the June summit should occur, the agenda at the summit, Berlin, conclusions on the control of nuclear weapons, Laos, Cuba. Specifically, with regard to Berlin, Bobby Kennedy addressed the importance of the Soviet understanding that the U.S. was indeed committed to Berlin, that talk of military action was not merely empty rhetoric. Said Kennedy, "I remember I emphasized to [Bolshakov] continuously that we would go to war on Berlin. He kept saying that he was sending back that message. Then he said to me afterward he didn't think the [Soviet] Ambassador was sending messages back."[74]

After the Berlin Wall was constructed, the Kennedy-Bolshakov relationship cooled down. However, regarding American and Russian tanks facing one another down in a tense confrontation on the Berlin border on 27 October 1961, Kennedy said, "I got in touch with Bolshakov and said the President would like them to take their tanks out of there in twenty-four hours. He said he'd speak to Khrushchev, and they took their tanks out in twenty-four hours. He delivered effectively when it was a matter that was important."[75] The Soviets stopped the Kennedy-Bolshakov relationship when it became publicized after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. President Kennedy asked Arthur Schlesinger to join the

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[73]Guthman and Shulman, 258.

[74]Ibid., 260.

[75]Ibid., 259-260.

staff as a "roving reporter and trouble-shooter," and he had his hands in much of what the Administration did, albeit most of the time in a marginal way.[76] Robert Kennedy reflected upon President Kennedy's opinion of Schlesinger, Special Assistant to the President from 1961 to 1964:

> [My brother] liked Arthur Schlesinger, but he thought he was a little bit of a nut sometimes. He thought he was sort of a gadfly and that he was having a helluva good time in Washington. He didn't do a helluva lot, but he was good to have around. He was a valuable contact, and he's also contributed some very stimulating, valuable ideas at various times. That made it well worthwhile. He wasn't brought in on any major policy matters, but he'd work on drafts of speeches. Also, he used to stimulate people all around the government by writing them memos, what they should be doing and what they should be thinking of, and frequently made a lot of sense. I think he was a valuable addition, Arthur Schlesinger, and I think the President thought so too.[77]

Schlesinger's memoranda, although they may have been thought provoking, may also have created unnecessary distractions that diffused the decision making process. Schlesinger's book, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, has been considered by some to be the definitive account of the Kennedy Administration and of the events during the Berlin Crisis. However, Hillenbrand contends that, regarding Berlin, it is "a travesty" and that the actual events have never been published accurately.[78] We reexamine the facts in the next chapter.

Others. There were others on the staff that played minor roles in the way things got done around the White House. Here are a few examples:

Kenneth P. O'Donnell was Special Assistant to the President during 1961. His primary responsibility was as Appointments Secretary. "[JFK] liked Kenny O'Donnell. He

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[76]Schlesinger, 143.

[77]Guthman and Shulman, 419.

[78]Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 3 March 1997.

liked being with Kenny. His judgment was good -- although frequently he didn't accept it... Kenny O'Donnell was so loyal to him."[79] Note the continual importance Kennedy placed on loyalty.

Walt W. Rostow was the Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs from January to November 1961. He worked directly for McGeorge Bundy and the President read many memoranda written by Rostow, especially after Vienna.

Richard N. Goodwin began with the Administration as Assistant Special Counsel to the President. President Kennedy liked Dick Goodwin but, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Goodwin was transferred to the State Department to strengthen it and did not make a major contribution to the decision making process during the Berlin Crisis.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Generally a major contributor of intelligence analysis as well as the primary source of all other aspects of the intelligence field, the CIA was conspicuously absent from 1961 Berlin Crisis activities in the first half of the year. The first National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) which was produced on the matter during the Kennedy Administration was dated late April, after the Bay of Pigs invasion. That was followed by about eight Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs) beginning in June, through the end of the year. The man who should have been the CIA's personal advocate with the President never established the necessary productive, professional rapport with the White House.

Allen W. Dulles. President-Elect Kennedy announced that he would retain Allen W. Dulles as his Director of Central Intelligence upon assuming office. Dulles had a family tradition of foreign affairs. His grandfather had been Secretary of State under President

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[79]Guthman and Shulman, 419.

Benjamin Harrison, a post that both Dulles's uncle, Robert Lansing, and his older brother, John Foster Dulles, also held. Dulles originally entered the diplomatic service in 1916, serving in a variety of posts abroad and as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference. After four years as chief of the State Department Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Dulles resigned from government service in 1926 and worked on Wall Street as a lawyer for the next fifteen years.[80]

During World War II, Dulles headed the Office of Strategic Services mission in Switzerland and later became a key figure in the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1948, Dulles was given a CIA appointment by President Truman. In 1951, he was placed in charge of covert operations when he permanently joined the CIA as Deputy Director for Plans. In February 1953, President Eisenhower appointed Dulles as Director of Central Intelligence where he flourished until the Bay of Pigs invasion.[81]

Ten days after the election, and Kennedy's decision to keep Dulles, the CIA director flew south to brief the President-Elect.

> Allen arrived in Palm Springs to brief the president-elect on the intelligence matters that he had deliberately withheld from him as a candidate. The setting by Ambassador Kennedy's swimming pool was familiar from their mellow previous encounters, but the substance of the discussion this time was different. On November 18, 1960, Kennedy was briefed for the first time on the CIA's covert paramilitary planning to overthrow Fidel Castro.[82]

When the invasion actually occurred, Dulles was out of the country on a routine speaking engagement at the Young President's Organization of Puerto Rico. The post-invasion investigation revealed that Dulles had "lost touch" with the operation as it neared,

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[80] *Facts on File* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 1991), 133-135.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Grose, 511-512.

that, "He became the Cuban operation's high-level advocate even as he dropped the reins of the operation itself."[83] Said Grose,

> The days of April 16 to 20 saw the proud CIA humbled as never before. Allen "looked like living death," wrote Robert Kennedy in the aftermath. "He had the gout and had trouble walking, and he was always putting his head in his hands." Surprisingly, Allen had provided no guiding hand through that week of crisis; he hovered between helplessness and irrelevance.[84]

Said Bobby Kennedy of Allen Dulles, "[the President] liked him. Thought he was a real gentleman, handled himself well. There were, obviously, so many mistakes made at the time of the Bay of Pigs that it wasn't appropriate that he should stay on. And he always took the blame. He was a real gentleman. [JFK] thought very highly of him."[85] President Kennedy admitted after the Bay of Pigs invasion that he should have gotten rid of Dulles earlier. Kennedy stated that he needed, "someone there [in CIA] with whom I can be in complete and intimate contact -- someone from whom I know I will be getting the exact pitch."[86] In spite of the President's admission, Dulles did not officially resign until 27 September 1961, at which time he was replaced by John Alex McCone who would serve as the Director of CIA until April of 1965.

Because of the Bay of Pigs failure, Kennedy's reliance on the CIA was significantly affected. He did not deal directly with Allen Dulles as much over the Berlin Crisis as he would have had it not occurred. Instead, from April to September of 1961, Dulles busied himself with the construction of CIA's new "campus" at Langley. It appears that the most serious exchanges between the CIA Director and the President were over whether or not there

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[83]Ibid., 515.

[84]Ibid., 525.

[85]Guthman and Shulman, 14.

[86]Schlesinger, 276.

should be signs on the highway openly marking the construction site as the new home of CIA headquarters. CIA analysis was limited to several NIEs which became a valuable part of the body of analysis considered by the President during the latter stages of the 1961 decision making process. However, there was no strong personal advocacy for the IC at the presidential level during the Berlin Crisis.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

There was discord between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There was also friction between the Chiefs and the new Secretary of Defense. This tension added to the intensity of the crisis as the President considered his options in Berlin.

The selection of the Secretary of Defense took place in a very roundabout way. President Kennedy received considerable advice on filling appointments from his father, Joseph Kennedy Sr. One of the people recommended to the younger Kennedy by his father was Robert Lovett. Bob Lovett, like McGeorge Bundy, was a Yale graduate. He had been a naval aviator in World War I, and during World War II he had served on the staff of the Secretary of War. In 1947, he served as an Undersecretary of State.

Bob Lovett had worked in government with a man named Robert McNamara during the war. Claimed Lovett, "he had been terrific: disciplined, with a great analytical ability, a great hunger for facts."[87] Lovett recommended McNamara to Kennedy as the ideal man to serve at Defense.

Robert S. McNamara. Bob McNamara, Harvard Business School graduate, professor, lieutenant colonel in the Air Force; he rose to the top at Ford Motor Company and then turned down a position as president of Ford to take the job as Secretary of Defense.

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[87] Halberstam, 10.

Reluctant to leave Ford at first, McNamara was also considered for Secretary of the Treasury, but when offered a choice, opted for Defense. His acceptance of the appointment was conditional, based upon the assurance that he would have control over other appointments at Defense, that although the President would get final approval, no one would come to Defense without his say so. Early on, President Kennedy considered making his brother, Bobby, an Undersecretary of Defense but believed that, "the Defense Department wasn't large enough for both of [their] personalities."[88]

Nominally a Republican, he backed Kennedy in the election and was supported by the auto union leadership in Michigan. First referred to by Lyndon Johnson as, "that fellow from Ford with the Stacomb on his hair," McNamara was expected by many to develop a legacy of prestige at Defense, "in part due to [his] tendency, conscious or unconscious, to usurp the powers of the Secretary of State," which combined with "[Dean] Rusk's tendency to let him do it."[89] Capitalizing upon his aggressive management style and strong business background, McNamara zealously wrestled with the Department of Defense bureaucracy, to the pleasure of some, and the chagrin of others. As Schlesinger wrote, on 1 March 1961,

> McNamara mounted his first major assault on the Pentagon, firing a fusillade of ninety-six questions, each aimed at a specific area, directed to a specific man and requiring a specific answer by a specific time. He wanted to know what the military were doing, why they thought they were doing it and whether there was not a more economical and efficient way of achieving the same result. No one had asked such questions before; and McNamara's memoranda grew sharp as his patience grew short.[90]

Bob McNamara was extremely loyal to the President and Kennedy respected and trusted him. Bobby Kennedy said, "[McNamara] had, of course, his weaknesses like

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[88]Guthman and Shulman, 36.

[89]Halberstam, 41, 43.

[90]Schlesinger, 318.

everybody else, but he was head and shoulders above everybody else. He'd done his homework; he spoke well; and he worked with the President."[91] President Kennedy seriously considered moving McNamara to State when Dean Rusk began to disappoint him a great deal.[92] In fact, he confided in McNamara more than Rusk when it came to matters of foreign policy.[93] McNamara's caustic approach to the U.S. military leadership may have been what was required in 1961. However, his focus on policy and the bureaucracy instead of expediting the conventional force buildup was not helpful in the first half of 1961. Ultimately, the fruit of McNamara's labor would not be revealed until the Vietnam War, when the Defense Department would be shaken to its core.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The most important figure at the Department of State was, of course, the Secretary. But there were several other actors at State who dealt with the President personally regarding Berlin. Included among these others were the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and the U.S. Ambassador at Large. Much more of the written analysis of the Berlin situation originated in the State Department than CIA. Dispatches from ambassadors, desk officers, former State Department officials; they all provided useful intelligence analysis. However, it is evident that disdain for State Department personnel among Kennedy insiders may have distracted the President's attention from some of this valuable information or, at a minimum, put a negative spin on what the President saw of it.

Dean Rusk. The Secretary of State should have played a pivotal role in the Berlin

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[91] Guthman and Shulman, 46.

[92] Ibid., 269.

[93] Ibid., 421.

Crisis. In fact he did, but not in a positive way. From the beginning, things did not go well for State in 1961. Early in the selection process, it became apparent that, "Bundy did not like Rusk... intolerant of second-rate minds, and sensing in Rusk something second-rate. Kennedy's future adviser on national security affairs cast a vote against Rusk, but it was not important, anyway, since he would be working in the White House and not at State."[94] Said Bobby Kennedy, "I always felt, if you had somebody who was a really good organizer, you could do something with the State Department... What happened, as far as the Department of State is concerned, is that Dean Rusk didn't organize it..."[95]

Bob Lovett, mentioned earlier, had brought Rusk to Kennedy's attention. Little known by the voters, Rusk was the head of the Rockefeller Foundation and had enjoyed the confidence of General Marshall in his military days. Lovett considered Rusk a very sound man but also offered a piece of prophetic advice to President Kennedy: "the relations between a Secretary of State and his President are largely dependent upon the President. Acheson, Lovett said, had been very good because Truman gave him complete confidence."[96]

Rusk was Georgia-born and had been a military man; he had served as a colonel in the China-Burma-India theater. The Kennedy pre-selection investigation into Rusk was far from exhaustive and the first communications between the new president and Rusk were discouraging. It was as if Kennedy was *looking* for a weak Secretary of State. Halberstam describes the Kennedy-Rusk relationship:

> more than any other senior official he was not on the Kennedy wavelength. There was no intimacy; the President never called him by his first name as he

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[94]Halberstam, 32.

[95]Guthman and Shulman, 9.

[96]Halberstam, 10.

> did the other senior officials. The Washington rumormongers, who sensed these nuances with their own special radar, soon turned on him. They claimed that Rusk would go, a rumor mill fed by Kennedy's own private remarks reflecting doubt upon the Secretary.[97]

This rocky relationship would not bode well for the Administration during the Berlin Crisis. In effect, it increased the risk of war for the entire world as it decreased the effectiveness of one of Kennedy's most powerful crisis management tools, the Department of State. The first piece of analysis we look at in Chapter 8 was written by the then current Germany Desk Officer at State. History has proven this paper a sound presentation of reality. However, due to the poor leadership of the Department of State during presidential transition, and the dysfunctional relationship between the Secretary and the President, this and other analysis was not examined closely nor did it receive the kind of strong advocacy in the Oval Office which would have positively affected the Administration's decision making process. Bobby Kennedy described the situation:

> Well, at the end [the President] was very frustrated with Rusk, who became rather a weak figure; and where the State Department functioned poorly; where [Rusk] was not prepared on issues to discuss them fully, or really he had never done his homework; and where all the important papers that were written -- the good ones -- were written by [JFK] personally or by people at the White House. And he really felt, at the end, that the ten or twelve people in the White House who worked under his direction with Mac Bundy or under Mac Bundy really performed all the functions of the State Department, except for the managerial functions of being an ambassador...
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> ...Very few suggestions of policy or position came from the State Department. And Rusk, when you'd get into any kind of a conference, had not anticipated problems that would arise and not prepared himself to answer questions -- was frequently unaware of the factual basis for a position and, really, had not done his homework. A rather weak figure.
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> The President and I discussed on a number of occasions -- particularly in the last couple of months, after the election -- moving Rusk out, perhaps to the United Nations, and appointing Bob McNamara Secretary of State.[98]

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[97]Ibid., 36.

[98]Guthman and Shulman, 44-45.

The historical evidence indicates that Rusk's leadership was at fault for not educating the President more quickly on the nature of the Berlin Crisis which was actually underway the day Kennedy assumed the presidency.

Foy D. Kohler. The Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from January of 1959 until July of 1962, Kohler first began working directly with the President in February 1961, during a meeting with the German Foreign Minister. He immediately became a fixture at the President's side during the coming months whenever German issues were being addressed. However, he was not a Presidential appointee and did not come into close contact with other members of the White House staff until after the Bay of Pigs disaster. He was one of "the principals" at the Vienna summit in June. Schlesinger branded Kohler a "complete Achesonian."[99] Bobby Kennedy said of Kohler during the 1962 selection process for a new ambassador to the Soviet Union, "I had been involved in a lot of conferences with Foy Kohler, and I was not impressed with him at all... He gave me the creeps. I didn't think he'd be the kind of person who could really get anything done with the Russians."[100]

As a career Foreign Service Officer, Kohler should have provided continuity and institutional knowledge during the presidential transition period. It is difficult to ascertain whether Kohler put forth the required effort to educate Rusk on the serious nature of the Berlin Crisis early on. However, his professional relationship with Rusk must be considered as a possible source of communication breakdown in the analysis process, and consequent weakness of the presidential decision making process.

Kohler eventually replaced Llewellyn Thompson as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union in July of 1962, in spite of Bobby Kennedy's objections.

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[99]Schlesinger, 383.

[100]Guthman and Shulman, 338.

Llewellyn Thompson. The U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union was a significant actor during the Berlin Crisis as he aggressively communicated from the embassy in Moscow. "Tommy" Thompson was well respected by the Kennedy administration and his timely written analysis usually made it across the President's desk. This correspondence was especially significant during the first few months of the Administration, and just before the Vienna summit, as Kennedy attempted to get to know Khrushchev through the Ambassador's inputs. As Bobby Kennedy's relationship with Georgi Bolshakov intensified, Thompson's inputs were given slightly less consideration but he never lost favor in the Oval Office.

Later, Thompson would return to the U.S. as the Special Advisor on Soviet Affairs to the Secretary of State and would play a major role during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Although his relationship with the President would not become very personal until tensions in Berlin had eased, he was always considered in a positive light. Said Bobby Kennedy,

> Tommy Thompson was terrific -- very tough -- always made a good deal of sense and, really, was sort of the motivating force behind the idea of giving the Russians an opportunity to back away, giving them some out [in the Cuban Missile Crisis]... And [the President] liked Tommy Thompson. This is obviously influenced by my personal opinion, you know, and I expect it's based on the conversations that we had. Tommy Thompson he thought was outstanding. I also thought he was outstanding. He made a major difference. The most valuable people during the Cuban crisis were Bob McNamara and Tommy Thompson, I thought.[101]

Thompson provided much of the insight on Berlin as Vienna approached but, since the President's perception was not yet one of crisis, and because conflicting viewpoints existed, this insight was perhaps not considered as soberly as it should have been.

Averell W. Harriman. Although not a major contributor during the Berlin Crisis, Harriman, who had been an Ambassador to the Soviet Union at the end of World War II,

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[101] Ibid., 18, 420.

was well respected by the Administration and did provide some insight early on (letters discussed in Chapter 3). Harriman visited Bonn and Berlin on 6-8 March for talks on a wide range of subjects, but primarily on NATO. Of President Kennedy's opinion of Harriman, Bobby Kennedy said, "He didn't think highly, really, of any other people in the State Department [besides Harriman]."[102]

CONSULTANTS

Kennedy sought and received advice from many people outside of the Administration during the course of his presidency, but two stand out during the Berlin Crisis in 1961: Henry Kissinger and Dean Acheson.

Henry A. Kissinger. A professor at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs, Kissinger was one of the first writers in the growing cottage industry that built itself upon the debate behind the strategy for the use of nuclear weapons. Kissinger was one of many theorists exploring the options which lay between blowing up the world and being too soft. This young German émigré followed in the footsteps of McGeorge Bundy at Harvard and traveled back and forth from Cambridge to Washington consulting on European issues, in his official capacity as a member of the National Security Council Staff to President Kennedy. The President tried to get Kissinger to move down to Washington, but in June, Kissinger wrote to Bundy explaining that he felt that there was enough brain power on the White House staff.[103] Eventually, he took over Bundy's old job as National Security Advisor for Lyndon Johnson.

Kissinger was very active in the debate over options which the President might

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[102] Ibid., 10.

[103] Letter, Henry Kissinger to McGeorge Bundy, 5 June 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

exercise in Berlin and worked independently, and with Arthur Schlesinger, to explore these diplomatic decisions -- primarily to counterbalance Dean Acheson's purely military emphasis. To negotiate, or not to negotiate, seemed to be the sticking point. Said Schlesinger,

> Henry Kissinger observed to Bundy that it was wrong "to have refusal to negotiate become a test of firmness... Firmness should not... be proved by seeming to shy away from a diplomatic confrontation." If Khrushchev would not accept a reasonable proposal, this, in Kissinger's view, was an argument *for* rather than against our taking the initiative. Any other course would see us "jockeyed into a position of refusing diplomatic solutions," and, when we finally agreed to discussion, as we inevitably must, it would seem an American defeat. Diplomacy, Kissinger concluded, was the "necessary corollary to the build-up."[104]

Kissinger's most significant written analysis on Berlin was published in a lengthy memorandum to the President dated 5 May 1961. It is also significant however that Martin Hillenbrand states that Kissinger's involvement in the crisis has been "vastly overrated" by historians.[105]

Dean G. Acheson. President Kennedy called upon former Secretary of State Dean Acheson in March of 1961 to undertake special studies of the problems of NATO and Germany. There were some in the Administration who considered Acheson a "hard-liner," and feared that the President might be persuaded to follow an aggressive path. But, as Schlesinger asserted, "Kennedy considered Acheson one of the most intelligent and experienced men around and did not see why he should not avail himself of 'hard' views before making his own judgments."[106]

Bobby Kennedy described the President's opinion of Acheson:

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[104] Schlesinger, 389.

[105] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 3 March 1997.

[106] Schlesinger, 380.

> He liked him. No, he didn't like him -- that's not correct. He respected him and found him helpful, found him irritating; and he thought his advice was worth listening to, although not accepted. On many occasions, his advice was worthless... He was in favor of increasing the number of troops there [in Berlin] and increasing our buildup. I think that was very instrumental in turning the Russians back.[107]

Dean Acheson, of course, had served as Secretary of State under Harry S Truman from 1949 to 1953. He was a major architect of U.S. foreign policy in the decade following World War II. Acheson was aligned with the Adenauer and de Gaulle camps regarding Berlin which believed that, "Khrushchev was testing Western resolve and the NATO countries must hold firm on the beleaguered city, no matter the cost."[108] Acheson and Adenauer were friends from years gone by and tended to see eye to eye. During his 12-13 April visit to the White House, Chancellor Adenauer warned Kennedy not to negotiate with the Soviets on Berlin claiming it would only serve to undermine NATO unity.[109]

Kennedy also sought Acheson's counsel regarding the Bay of Pigs invasion, but when Acheson strongly recommended not going through with the landing, the President did not heed his advice. The 3 April 1961 paper which Acheson wrote on Berlin stirred much debate in the Departments of Defense and State. It kicked the debate over Flexible Response into high gear. His advice, "helped fix the debate [over Berlin] for a time in terms of a clear-cut choice between negotiation and a military showdown."[110] By the early months of 1963, Acheson had grown tired of the Administration's style of decision making. He complained that, "They are pretty good at improvising; and... if we must get into trouble, it should be

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[107] Guthman and Shulman, 19.

[108] Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years 1953-71* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 130.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Schlesinger, 383.

suddenly and unexpectedly, because they do best with this sort of a situation. But God help us... if they are given any time to think!"[111]

Acheson was aggressive, but as an outsider, his effect in the policy process was somewhat distracting. It shifted the Administration's focus onto the military realities of the situation to the detriment of the diplomatic process. This, combined with Kennedy's weak knowledge of our national interests in Berlin, hurt the efficiency of the presidential decision making process.

CONCLUSION

The reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions about these people as individuals. It is not this paper's objective to draw judgements in this regard, but merely to observe that this was "the team"; along with the President, this was the decision making unit during the 1961 phase of the Berlin Crisis. The period of presidential transition was without doubt incredibly challenging for these individuals. However, this in no way reduced the responsibility which they shared to support the President during the Berlin Crisis. These individuals were the final level of intelligence analysis for the President. Any personal weaknesses which they contributed as members of the team -- which were left unaddressed -- reflected directly upon the President, as captain of the ship of state.

The final step in our examination is to observe the team in action.

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[111] Brinkley, 196.

⋆ CHAPTER 8 ⋆

THE CRISIS UNFOLDS

We have considered crisis management, intelligence and Kennedy's closest advisors during the Berlin Crisis in 1961. In light of this foundation, we now pick up where the crisis background in Chapter 3 left off, and examine some of the intelligence analysis on Berlin which President Kennedy received, in the order in which he received it. It is apparent from an examination of archival sources that all of the analysis necessary to make sound decisions regarding Berlin was available to the Administration before Vienna. Lack of bureaucratic skill on the new White House team -- specifically, poor cooperation with CIA, State and Defense Department personnel reflected in the dysfunctional professional relationships presented in the previous chapter -- allowed the Soviets to keep the political and diplomatic initiative throughout 1961 and surprise Kennedy and his Administration with the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Our examination of the crisis management decision making process is broken down into subcategories based upon the following periods of time: from Kennedy's inauguration up to the Bay of Pigs invasion, from the invasion and its aftermath up to the Vienna summit, from the summit up to the construction of the Berlin Wall, and finally, the period of time immediately following the construction of the wall during which the crisis subsided.

In January of 1961, despite the availability of some human intelligence, Premier Khrushchev's intentions were not transparent and were open to conflicting interpretations. There were "indications that he was committed to pursuing the 'world communist' agenda, perhaps even more intensely than before: Soviet backing for radical forces in the Third World, his claims that the balance of forces was moving in favor of the Soviet Union, his

recourse to threatening language and his apparently simplistic Marxist-Leninist creed."[112] Khrushchev's 1959 *Foreign Affairs* article and the characterizations Kennedy received from Ambassadors Harriman and Thompson left many questions. According to Robert Kennedy, the President did not really come to consider Khrushchev as an "irresponsible person" until after the Vienna summit in June of 1961.[113] Hillenbrand contends that the Administration did not take the Berlin Crisis seriously until after Vienna as it was preoccupied first with the transition to office, and then with the Bay of Pigs invasion and its aftermath.[114]

Herein lies the problem: the President did not view the situation as a crisis -- i.e., he initially did not have the perception of a "dangerously high probability of war." By referring to the Snyder-Deising model back in Chapter 2, we see that, according to our national interests in Berlin, which had been defined by the State Department's 20 December 1958 statement ("Statement Setting Forth the Legal Right of the United States to Access to and Presence in Berlin"), the U.S. was headed for a dangerous confrontation in January 1961 when Khrushchev renewed his threat of the separate peace treaty. Notwithstanding the Snyder-Deising definition, it is clear that regardless of Kennedy's perception, the crisis was real. Because this clash of interests was not immediately recognized, and *effectively* brought to the President's attention, the crisis was allowed to grow until Vienna. After Vienna, and partly as a result of Kennedy's Bay-of-Pigs-inspired convictions, the reality of the crisis was finally recognized by Kennedy and his Administration. However, Kennedy's reaction to this recognition was to create an unwieldy, *ad hoc* analysis machine that did not contribute to the efficient decision making which is key to effective crisis management. Consequently, he was surprised by the Wall. Let us look at how this crisis unfolded.

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[112] Richardson, 205.

[113] Guthman and Shulman, 28.

[114] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 3 March 1997.

FROM INAUGURATION TO INVASION

Thanks to the success of the CIA's U-2 spy plane program, the presence of a "missile gap" was estimated to be highly unlikely.[115] Nonetheless, uncertainty haunted the new Administration. Kennedy needed more information before he could choose the best policy option for Berlin. And so the learning process began, with the crisis already in progress.

Some of the early analysis provided to the President on the situation in Berlin was published in December 1960, in a RAND Corporation paper (Research Memoranda 2689) entitled "Military Power and the Cold War: Case of West Berlin." This paper, although somewhat general in scope, supported the Administration's move toward Flexible Response. It suggested that political "and cold-war benefits do not flow automatically from military power. Military strength must be exploited skillfully and judiciously to yield maximum benefits." Further it stressed leverage tactics stating that the defender in the case of "diplomatic blackmail" (i.e., Khrushchev's separate treaty ultimatum) should indicate a readiness to expand the arena of conflict if need be.[116] Instead of providing any useful intelligence analysis, the RAND paper was a good example of a theoretical approach which fell short of meeting the Administration's need for practical information.

Martin Hillenbrand, a Foreign Service Officer who had served as the Mission Director in Berlin since 1958, was the Germany Desk Officer for the State Department in 1961. He wrote a concise yet comprehensive paper (dated 10 January 1961) on the Berlin "problem" which was routed to the White House by mid January as a part of the State Department's transition package for the new Administration. Although there was a considerable historical

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[115] Grose, 473.

[116] A. L. George, "Military Power and the Cold War: Case of West Berlin," (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 26 December 1960), 35, 38, "Germany-Berlin General, Military Power and the Case of West Berlin 12/26/60" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

file on Berlin, this paper constituted the most current, thorough written advice which President Kennedy may have received upon entering office. It is impossible to determine whether the President actually read this paper in January, but Hillenbrand recalls giving it to Rusk around the January time frame as Rusk was making his preparations to assume his position as Secretary of State.[117] The paper was filed in the January 1961 National Security Files at the JFK Library indicating that it did in fact find its way into the hands of the White House staff. Later versions of the same paper, which basically restated the summary conclusions of the January edition, were published in March of 1961.[118]

The paper described the challenges ahead for Kennedy's decision making process and is worthy of detailed examination. In the paper, Hillenbrand effectively described all of the perceived *negotiating* options available to President Kennedy. He characterized the situation as follows,

> whenever it suits their purposes, the Soviets and the East Germans can again precipitate an active crisis and restore Berlin to the front pages of the world press. We can live with the status quo in Berlin but can take no real initiative to change it for the better. To a greater or lesser degree, the Soviets and East Germans can, whenever they are willing to assume the political consequences, change it for the worse.[119]

Hillenbrand criticized the then current Berlin policy, describing the city as, "an exclave which is militarily indefensible and which can only be maintained, under lessening conditions of credibility, by the ultimate threat of thermonuclear war. Critics of Western policy castigate it

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[117] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 3 March 1997.

[118] Martin J. Hillenbrand, "The Problem of Berlin," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, ed. Charles Sampson, Vol. XIV, *Berlin Crisis 1961-1962* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 33.

[119] Hillenbrand, Memorandum dated 10 January 1961, 1.

for immobility, lack of imagination, and failure to seize the initiative."[120] He recommended that the U.S. "review the status" of Berlin as well as "the approaches realistically open to us."

Hillenbrand began his discussion by listing what he believed were the possible Soviet objectives in Berlin. He offered two theories: "(a) that the Soviets are using Berlin essentially as a lever to achieve their wider purpose of obtaining recognition of the GDR and consolidation of the satellite bloc, or (b) that West Berlin is a primary objective in itself because its continuance in its present form is so harmful to the East that it must be eliminated."[121] He contended that the truth probably lay somewhere in between. He characterized West Berlin's role as, "a channel for the flow of refugees, as a center of Western propaganda and intelligence activities, and as a show window which daily and dramatically highlights the relative lack of success in the East..."[122]

If one carries Hillenbrand's thoughts to their logical conclusion, one sees that the biggest practical problem that the Soviets had with Berlin was the refugee flow. Despite the very real possibility of miscalculation, all evidence pointed to the idea that the Soviets did not want to undertake military action which might lead to war. Securing the border in Berlin was a rational Soviet solution which was never given serious consideration by the Administration. Interestingly enough, the *New York Herald Tribune* would later report on 23 August 1961,

> that the Communist plan to seal the border in this fashion had been known to the Allies since 1958 and had been dubbed 'Operation Chinese Wall' by U.S. and West German intelligence agents. An East German government aide defecting to West Berlin in July 1958 had brought along a document describing the plan, which called initially for a barbed-wire barrier, then its replacement by a cement-block fence and finally the erection of substantial 'palisades.' A

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., 1-2.

[122] Ibid., 2.

> copy of the plan had been turned over to U.S. agents by Mayor Brandt, who was reported to have given little weight to the plan because (a) the defector had said the U.S.S.R. had vetoed it and (b) Brandt thought the Western Allies would be sure to challenge such a violation of the 4-power occupation agreement.[123]

Hillenbrand began his review of the status of Berlin by discussing the development of the "problem," asserting that it had gone through four broad phases. The first began immediately following the Soviet note of November 1958, and lasted until the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers in May 1959. It was during this period that the Western powers drew up their peace plan and "made considerable progress in their contingency planning." The second phase followed the Geneva conference. During this phase, the West agreed to discuss Berlin outside the context of German reunification. Both the West and the Soviets advanced proposals for "interim arrangements." Neither side accepted the other's proposals. The third phase occurred between the September 1959 Camp David talks and the collapse of the Paris Summit Meeting in May 1960. The fourth and final phase, according to Hillenbrand, went from the aborted summit up to the 1960 U.S. presidential election, during which time the Soviets postponed their "threatened unilateral action pending the inauguration of a new American administration...by the end of 1960 the situation in and about Berlin had returned to as near normal as it ever gets."

Hillenbrand described the current policy as a "holding operation" that had been successful due to the uncertainty of U.S. willingness to risk thermonuclear war. From this, rationality on the part of Khrushchev is implied, and one can reason that he was sincere about his desires to avoid war. Hillenbrand lamented the fact that, among the Western allies, the U.S. had provided much of the initiative. He stated that, "since the collapse of the Summit,

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[123] Peter Grimm, "The Berlin Crisis of 1961," Doctoral Dissertation for Dr. John S. Gibson, Tufts University, 12 May 1977, 19-20.

the Western emphasis has been largely on refinement of contingency planning... and there has been little further discussion of the substance of the position which the Western Powers might take into future negotiations with the Soviets on Berlin."[124] He voiced the expectation that the British and the French would approach the U.S. regarding negotiations by the end of the month. As far as Khrushchev was concerned, Hillenbrand expected him to push for the "Free City of West Berlin" proposal as a starting point to any negotiations. Throughout the course of 1961, Hillenbrand's position was consistent. He always believed that negotiations from a strong (albeit ambiguous) position were key to diffusing the crisis.[125]

Next in the paper, Hillenbrand began to discuss the formulation of the Western position for 1961. He stressed the need to do something soon, to create, "a proper psychological framework for discussion of the Berlin question." His thoughts supported the perception of the need to shift from the strategy of Massive Retaliation to Flexible Response, but they also described a situation in which the U.S. had the opportunity to seize the initiative. Unfortunately, history shows the failure of the Kennedy Administration to do so in a timely manner. As Hillenbrand stated,

> It is fair to assume...that the Soviets do not wish to see the United States mobilize its resources behind a greatly enhanced defense program of the type which accompanied the war in Korea, when we quadrupled our defense expenditures. A warning, therefore, that continuation of the Soviet threat to Berlin will evitably bring the kind of massive mobilization of American resources for defense of which Khrushchev knows we are capable, but which neither we nor he basically desire, might provide a useful prelude to any negotiations with the Soviets on Berlin.[126]

Hillenbrand then listed and described what he saw as the nine "conceivably possible"

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[124] Hillenbrand, Memorandum dated 10 January 1961, 5.

[125] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

[126] Ibid., 7.

Berlin Crisis negotiating options which are summarized briefly below:

Option 1: All-German "Sweetening" for Some Interim Arrangement on Berlin. This option consisted of finding a way to make the Soviets believe they were moving toward one of their two possible objectives listed above (i.e., the recognition of the GDR or the capture of West Berlin.) Hillenbrand listed four ways in which this might be accomplished:

a) Enhance the status of the GDR, making it a *de facto* entity to deal with the West, perhaps sweetening the 28 July 1959 Geneva proposals by permitting all-German talks under the cover of a Four-Power Group.

b) Change the Western peace plan, extending the time period from seven to ten years to prove to the Soviets that there would not be a showdown by free elections for an extended period, while the Mixed German Committee provided for in the peace plan presumably would be in operation.

c) Reduce troops in Germany and/or place limits on West German armament. This idea might at least convince Khrushchev to postpone Soviet action while it was being explored.

d) Keep the possibility open to consideration as a tactical expedient, despite French and German objections, of expressing willingness to discuss the principles of a peace treaty with Germany, to the extent that it might tip the balance in favor of preventing Soviet unilateral action against the Western position in Berlin.

Hillenbrand asserted that, "it is doubtful whether any of the foregoing [four] ideas would really contribute much in a practical sense to the process of achieving German reunification though ostensibly related thereto."[127]

Option 2: Temporary Geneva-Type Arrangements. This option consisted of a

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[127] Ibid., 8.

proposal for an interim arrangement on Berlin to last for a specified number of years which might conceivably proceed along the lines of the Western proposals at Geneva of 28 July 1959, perhaps with certain modifications or additions. In the course of the presentation of this option, Hillenbrand suggested that,

> the idea that the West is in a position to improve its situation in Berlin to any marked degree hardly seems realistic, although this consideration has not deterred the Germans and the Berliners from making rather far-reaching proposals for Western demands to be made during negotiations, the achievement of which would constitute a major diplomatic defeat for the Soviets in a situation where they admittedly negotiate from a position of geographical and tactical strength.[128]

Option 3: All-Berlin Proposal. This option was submitted primarily for "tactical and propaganda reasons" as it was considered nonnegotiable with the Soviets.

Option 4: Guaranteed City. This option was described as,

> perhaps the most acceptable arrangement on Berlin which can be devised involving a change of juridical basis for the Western presence in the city...In essence, it involved agreement by the Four Powers to guarantee the security of Western military and civil access to West Berlin, with the Western Powers agreeing simultaneously to suspend the exercise of their occupation rights so long as the agreement was otherwise being observed.[129]

Hillenbrand predicted that this option "would probably cause a political crisis within the Western alliance, since it would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and loss of determination to maintain our position in Berlin."[130]

Option 5: Solution C of the April 1959 London Working Group Report. Focusing on the access problem, this option provided that,

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[128] Ibid., 10.

[129] Ibid., 11.

[130] Ibid., 12.

> if an impasse had been reached at the conference and it seemed that the Soviets would proceed to take unilateral action purporting to end their responsibilities in the access field, the Western Powers might wish to consider making a proposal involving a series of interlocking but unilateral declarations on Berlin access aimed at achieving a freezing of existing procedures, with ultimate Soviet responsibility being maintained, although implementation might be by the East German authorities...[Hillenbrand considered it] unwise to open any negotiation with the Soviets by putting forward solution C. If used at all, it would seem most effective as a fallback position after a process of elimination of other possibilities has taken place.[131]

Option 6: Tacit Temporary Freeze. This option's objective was to forestall, with some sort of holding action, unilateral action by the Soviets until after the German elections in September 1961. Hillenbrand stated that this approach, "may no longer have much relevance in view of what seems to be Soviet determination to resolve the Berlin question in 1961."[132]

Option 7: Delaying Action Without Specific Substantive Arrangement. This option was submitted as not having much relevance to the situation in 1961.

Option 8: Mitigated Breakdown of Negotiations. This option was put forward as an attempt to preserve the essentials of the Western position without a new agreement. Its primary focus was to avoid a major crisis or blow to Western prestige.

Option 9: Complete Breakdown of Negotiations with the Soviets. The final option presented was to cope with the eventuality that the Soviets will sign a peace treaty with the GDR and turn over all checkpoint controls to the GDR authorities. It meant putting contingency plans into action. Hillenbrand left the outcome of the execution of this option open to speculation.

In conclusion, Hillenbrand despaired that the, "history of the Berlin crisis since November of 1958 gives little reason for thinking that a lasting settlement can be devised

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[131] Ibid., 12-13.

[132] Ibid., 13.

which, under current circumstances, will prove acceptable to both East and West."[133] He drove home the support for Flexible Response by saying that, "A vital component of the Western position is the maintenance of a credible deterrent against unilateral Soviet action. Without this the full geographic weaknesses of the Western position in Berlin will have decisive weight in any negotiation. Thought should be given to the possibility of other deterrents than the pure threat of ultimate thermonuclear war."[134]

The Hillenbrand paper is significant for several reasons other than merely as a summary of negotiating options. First, it most clearly defined the State Department's estimate of Soviet intentions in Germany -- an intelligence analysis of sorts. Second, it stated quite clearly that, not only was the West operating from a geopolitical deficit in Berlin vis à vis the Soviets, but the U.S. had become the *de facto* leader of the Alliance in Berlin, and if Western interests were to be served there, the U.S. would have to lead the way -- i.e., the President needed to act soon. Third, the action required was a conventional force build up to seize the initiative, accompanied by negotiations. Hillenbrand did not clearly identify the best U.S. negotiating position, for as he now admits, there *was* no good position.[135]

A weakness of Hillenbrand's paper was the failure to distinguish between the idea of Berlin as a "problem" as opposed to a "crisis." As discussed already, the President's actions show that he also considered Berlin a "problem." A universal principle emerges here: the hesitancy to use strong language in written analysis -- to get the point across -- is a disservice to senior decision makers. They do not have time to read between the lines. Only succinct, candor can cut through the fog of overwhelming information which unavoidably fills the mind of government executives. Academic excellence does not count for much in a crisis,

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[133] Ibid., 15.

[134] Ibid., 15-16.

[135] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

nor does diplomacy among statesmen of the same country.

In an "airgram" to Secretary of State Rusk dated 24 January 1961, Ambassador Thompson detailed a conversation he had with Khrushchev on 21 January. Thompson was careful to describe as much of the conversation as possible in an effort not only to pass information, but to provide the Secretary of State (and of course the President who also received a copy of the airgram) with analysis of Khrushchev's personal character. Thompson was direct with Khrushchev and told him that, "What worried the West was not economic and social organization, but concern that [the] Soviet Union itself desired to dominate the world with Communism as [a] means to this end."[136] Thompson cited Hungary as an example. Khrushchev seemed to downplay Western concerns but expressed a strong desire to improve trade relations with the West, saying that this would in turn improve political relations. He blamed the U.S. for not allowing these trade relations to develop. It appears that Khrushchev was operating from a "wait and see" perspective, uncertain as to how to deal with the new U.S. administration. Finally, Thompson concluded with a comment on Khrushchev's physical state, saying that he, "seemed reasonably well but there were some signs that he had felt the strain of the long debates in the Central Committee Plenum."[137]

An important concept to recognize with regard to the presidential decision making process here is that the two leaders, Kennedy and Khrushchev, had begun posturing. They were trying to get a feel for how the other would behave in the days to come. Neither leader had reached a conclusion yet about the character of the other. Recall Harriman's characterization of Khrushchev as a "realist" (Chapter 3). With the Hillenbrand paper in mind, it is reasonable to suspect that Kennedy was thinking along the lines of, "how can I

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[136] Letter, Llewellyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 24 January 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[137] Ibid.

contain Khrushchev?" and Khrushchev was thinking, "how far can I push Kennedy?" These questions personified the very nature of the conflict inherent between the Soviet and U.S. regimes, as well as the conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs.

On 28 January, Secretary of State Rusk sent President Kennedy a chronology of events in Berlin with a one page cover memo attached. It is significant that although Hillenbrand's detailed analysis was available, Rusk apparently chose to give the President the most basic analytical product available and informed the President that a "full brief" was forthcoming. Details of this brief are unknown.

On 30 January, the Secretary of State received a telegram from Ambassador Thompson.[138] The primary concern expressed by Ambassador Thompson was that intelligence estimates of Soviet military capabilities were being exaggerated by U.S. military intelligence. Further, that this overestimate, "has resulted from the natural tendency [of] our military to assess [an] enemy's capabilities at [a] maximum as may be only prudent from this point of view."[139] Without citing evidence, Thompson stressed the need to continue to concentrate on a "second-strike capability and make clear [to the Soviets that we are] doing so."[140] Thompson expressed concern over the accuracy of intelligence estimates of Soviet military capabilities and said that these affect our "(1) estimate [of] their intentions in [the] political field, (2) formulation [of] our own policies to meet our estimate of their capabilities and intentions and (3) our estimate [of] their reactions [to] our policies and actions."[141]

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[138] A significant administrative observation when considering the flow of information in the Oval Office is that although the telegram was marked "Top Secret - Eyes Only" for the Secretary of State, the archives copy was marked in pen, "original to Mr. Bundy" and "President has seen - B." (with "B" almost certainly indicating McGeorge Bundy).

[139] Telegram, Llewellyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 30 January 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

Thompson went on to say that,

> among other things I think re[garding] (1) that because of emphasis on danger in [the] military field we have tended [to] underestimate [the] seriousness of [the] threat in [the] political. Re[garding] (2) I think we sometimes react in [a] military way to Soviet political objectives. Re[garding] (3) if [the] Soviets [are] as relatively weak militarily as I suspect, their reaction to SAMOS, attitude toward inspection, etc., would be quite different than if they are as strong as we give them credit for...
>
> It may be that we need two estimates of Soviet military capabilities, one for purely military use in determining our own defense needs, and [the] other as [a] basis for policy determinations, particularly in [the] political field, in which case we could be more realistic and not allow such wide margins for security reasons.[142]

This input from Thompson identified the need for the Administration to go beyond military intelligence for information on Soviet capabilities and to use multiple estimates to insure accuracy. It foreshadowed Kennedy's dissatisfaction with the military establishment during the Bay of Pigs invasion and played into the post-invasion changes that would be initiated after that failure. It also foreshadowed Kennedy's request for analysis from Acheson and Kissinger, but did not explain the failure to use Intelligence Community (IC) analysis from State, DOD, and CIA first. In separating political and military efforts, Thompson's assessment meshed nicely with Hillenbrand's emphasis on an approach combining conventional force buildup and negotiations. Using worst case scenarios, or as Thompson put it, "assessing Soviet military capabilities at a maximum," caused problems as discussed in Chapter 5. Used for planning purposes, worst case scenarios necessarily become more bleak as confidence in intelligence decreases. One can deduct from Thompson's telegram, and the analysis that followed, that confidence in the IC was already low, even before the Bay of Pigs invasion.

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[142] Ibid.

Between February and March, it appears that President Kennedy began to go outside the government for advice, perhaps prompted by the Thompson telegram. This effort was another indication of low confidence in the current sources of intelligence analysis. One of the first people whom Kennedy sought out was a professor from Harvard University's Center for International Affairs, Henry Kissinger, whom he temporarily "deputized" as a member of the National Security Council staff. Dr. Kissinger went to Washington in mid March for a series of briefings by the State Department, the CIA, and the Department of Defense to "read into the problem." The second outsider of stature whom Kennedy consulted was former President Eisenhower's Secretary of State (1949-1953), Dean Acheson. We examine the role of these two men later.

Five days after the 30 January telegram, Thompson sent another telegram to Secretary of State Rusk, specifically addressing U.S. options in Berlin and his own estimates of Soviet political intentions. In it he said,

> I believe Soviet interests as such lie rather in [the] German problem as [a] whole than Berlin. [The] Soviet Union [is] interested in [the] stabilization [of] their western frontier and Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, particularly East Germany which [is] probably most vulnerable. [The] Soviets [are] also deeply concerned with German military potential and fear West Germany will eventually take action which will face them with [a] choice between world war or retreat from East Germany. Even if [the] Berlin question were settled to Soviet satisfaction, [the] problem of Germany would remain [a] major issue between East and West. [The] Berlin question [is] nevertheless of great current importance because:
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> 1) It is [a] convenient and forceful means of leverage for [the] Soviets;
> 2) Khrushchev's prestige [is] personally involved;
> 3) [The] Soviets [are] under some pressure from [the] Ulbricht regime [in East Germany];
> 4) [The] present situation in Berlin threatens [the] stability of [the] East German regime because of its use as [an] escape route, base for espionage and propaganda activities, etc.
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> Soviet proposals on Berlin [are] designed [to] enable [the] East German regime eventually to acquire it or as minimum completely neutralize it, while to some

extent saving face for [the] West.[143]

Thompson declared that it was, "Impossible to assess with any degree [of] accuracy Khrushchev's present intentions." He went on, however, to predict that if there was some activity on the German problem that might indicate possibilities for after the September elections, Khrushchev might not bring Berlin to a head in 1961. If there was no progress however, Thompson believed that Khrushchev would proceed with a separate peace treaty which would bring about, "a highly dangerous situation and one which could get out of control." He made his case for Hillenbrand's "All-German 'Sweetening'/interim arrangement" option, saying that it would gain time for both sides. Note that the Thompson telegram points out very plainly that the Soviets' perceived the need to secure the border in Berlin -- at a minimum. Note also however that Thompson refers to Berlin as either a "problem," a "question," or a "situation."

On 17 February, the President, Secretary Rusk, Assistant Secretary Kohler, and others met with Dr. Heinrich von Brentano, Germany's Foreign Minister. Brentano expressed his opinion that the Soviets, "will hesitate to take any drastic steps with regard to Berlin as long as they know the Western Allies will not tolerate any such steps."[144] The President's remarks during this meeting made it clear that *he* believed the Soviets would strive to sign a separate peace treaty, and then resort to further and more drastic action at a later date -- this despite the advice which he had received that the Soviets did not want to get into an uncontrollable military conflict over the city. Although Foreign Minister Brentano considered "more drastic action" a danger, "he appeared to feel very strongly that there would be no

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[143] Telegram, Llewellyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 4 February 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[144] Foy D. Kohler, "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 9.

action on the part of the Soviets as long as they knew that the Allies would not stand for any disruption of the present Berlin arrangement."[145] From Kohler's memo, it is clear that President Kennedy dominated this meeting from the U.S. side and that Secretary Rusk played a much more minor role. It is also clear that the President was convinced that "drastic Soviet action," a worst case scenario, was highly probable despite advice to the contrary. With the depth of the President's convictions in mind, two things are puzzling. First, why did Secretary Rusk not provide more immediate and aggressive support to follow up on the Berlin issues? Second, why, if Kennedy's convictions about Soviet intentions were sincere, did the President not initiate the conventional military forces buildup process right away?

Ten days later (27 February), Secretary Rusk advised Ambassador Thompson to inform Khrushchev that the U.S. was in the process of consulting with allies and that "in due course" would put forward its ideas.[146] Rusk stated that it, "would not be possible for [the] U.S. to contemplate a change in city in regard to our rights and position in Berlin which would represent material change for [the] worse in [the] Western position in that city or access thereto."[147]

On 9 March, Thompson met with Khrushchev for three hours to deliver a letter from President Kennedy and to conduct a general discussion. It was during this meeting that Khrushchev called West Berlin a "bone in the throat of Soviet-American relations."[148] Expressing confidence in Soviet economic growth however, he again stressed that the U.S.S.R. was not interested in encroaching upon West Berlin and expressed the desire for a

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[145] Ibid., 10.

[146] Telegram, Dean Rusk to Ambassador Thompson, 28 February 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 16.

[147] Ibid., 18.

[148] Telegram, Llewelyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 10 March 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 19.

peace treaty.

The next day, the President and Foy Kohler met with the German Ambassador, Wilhelm G. Grewe. Ambassador Grewe commented on a memorandum his government had received from the Soviets on 17 February, stating their desire for a separate peace treaty and the desire to pursue the "free city" approach to Berlin. Grewe stated that he believed the memorandum was not a significant change in the Soviet stance and that he did not believe it should be interpreted as an ultimatum. He then expressed the Federal Republic of Germany's interest in U.S. press reports of a change in U.S. military strategy (Flexible Response).[149] Ambassador Grewe's outlook, although diplomatic, may have contributed to the malaise that was at work in the presidential decision making machinery.

On 13 March, the President and Foy Kohler met with Willy Brandt, the Governing Mayor of Berlin. Regarding the status of Berlin, Mayor Brandt told the President that,

> he thought the critical date to keep one's eye on was the October Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. He believed that Khrushchev might feel the need of some kind of action favorable from his point of view prior to that meeting. In reply to the President's question as to what the nature of such action might be the Mayor expressed the opinion that it would probably not be in the form of a serious military confrontation. However, Khrushchev might decide to go ahead with his program to conclude a separate peace treaty with the "GDR."[150]

Mayor Brandt stressed the fact that Berlin was an "escape hatch" to the West. He also expressed his thoughts that the East German Army might not stick with the Soviets if they made a "significant move on Berlin." Again, we see the border problem given legitimacy and a Soviet "move on Berlin" dubbed unlikely.

In a 16 March telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Ambassador Thompson

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[149] Foy D. Kohler, "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 21-25.

[150] Ibid., 26.

again expressed the need for the President to use negotiations to "defer showdown" in Berlin. He stated that, "If we expect [the] Soviets to leave [the] Berlin problem as is, then we must at least expect [the] East Germans to seal off [the] sector boundary in order [to] stop what they must consider intolerable continuation [of the] refugee flow through Berlin."[151] Further, Thompson stressed that the refugee flow to the West was disadvantageous to the West in many respects as well. He stated that inaction would, in effect, be choosing between two alternatives: allowing a separate peace treaty to occur, or taking positive steps to prevent it. He asked the question which he believed should be posed to Chancellor Adenauer during the latter's upcoming visit, "What action does [Adenauer] propose we take if East Germans close [the] sector boundary and what would [the] West Germans do?"[152] Once again, the U.S. advisor closest to Khrushchev gave candid advice to the Secretary of State with no apparent response.

On 24 March, Undersecretary of State George McGhee forwarded a paper to McGeorge Bundy which was basically a revised version of the Hillenbrand paper. He related that individual studies were being done on the various negotiating options listed in the paper. Although not a major actor during the Berlin Crisis, George McGhee was a controversial figure among the President's inner circle and was particularly disliked by Bobby Kennedy. This personal conflict is yet another good example of the weak rapport between the White House and the State Department which plagued the U.S. during 1961. Said Bobby Kennedy of George McGhee's responsibility as the primary administrator at State,

> George McGhee was over there and he was supposed to do that, but he was useless. In every conversation you had with him, you couldn't possibly understand what he was saying. I was involved with him a good deal in 1962,

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[151] Telegram, Llewellyn Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 16 March 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 32.

[152] Ibid., 33.

> and it was just impossible. Finally, I talked to the President at his birthday. I guess it was '62. He said, "If you feel so strongly" -- George McGhee was a good friend of Dean Rusk -- "why don't you go see Dean Rusk and ask him to get rid of him?"[153]

Bobby Kennedy took the President's suggestion and McGhee was eventually "shipped off."

As mentioned earlier, between February and July 1961, Kennedy sought former Secretary of State Dean Acheson's advice on Berlin. Acheson emphasized the need for a military response, and downplayed a diplomatic one. He believed negotiations would weaken the NATO alliance. Acheson's memorandum to President Kennedy dated 3 April 1961 advised that:

> Decisions and preparations to meet this crisis should be made at the earliest possible date.
>
> Berlin is of great importance. It is more than probable, and approaches certitude, that if the United States accepted a Communist take-over of Berlin -- under whatever face-saving and delaying device -- the power status in Europe would be starkly revealed and Germany, and probably France, Italy and Benelux, would make the indicated adjustments. The United Kingdom would hope that something would turn up. It wouldn't.
>
> If the USSR is not to dominate Europe, and, by doing so, dominate Asia and Africa also, a willingness to fight for Berlin is essential. Economic and political pressures will not be effective; they would degrade the credibility of the United States commitment to NATO. Nor would threatening to initiate general nuclear war be a solution. The threat would not carry conviction; it would invite a preemptive strike; and it would alienate allies and neutrals alike. The fight for Berlin must begin, at any rate, as a local conflict. The problem is how and where will it end. This uncertainty must be accepted.[154]

In bold contrast to what Kennedy had received up to that point, Acheson's analysis of Berlin confidently castigated proponents of negotiations and introduced the singular conviction that the Administration needed to take specific military measures immediately to prepare for what might be an inevitable confrontation. Of note, he also referred to Berlin as a "crisis." Recall

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[153] Guthman and Shulman, 10.

[154] Memorandum, Dean Acheson to President Kennedy, 3 April 1961, "Germany-Berlin General 4/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

that this advice came two weeks prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion, an operation which Acheson had condemned in advance. Tension in the White House must have been rising steadily with the implication that military conflict over Berlin was becoming more likely. Acheson went on matter-of-factly to make military force recommendations:

> Doubts about an air operation arise from lack of any clear idea of what it seeks to or, if successful, will achieve...
>
> A ground operation presents advantages and opportunities. It also presents grave dangers of escalation and of the Western force being destroyed or cut off -- especially if and when the Elbe has been crossed. If undertaken it should be by a considerable force. A battalion is too small. It can be stopped, defeated or captured without disclosing any of the intentions or achieving any of the results desired. Its only merit seems to be in the fact that this is as far as the British have been willing to plan. This is not adequate justification. An armored division, with another division in reserve, is a wholly different matter. This is a formidable force. It raises the most difficult questions for the other side. It cannot be stopped without military action. It can take care of itself against East German or token Soviet opposition. It can raise the issue of determined Russian resistance without the certainty of disaster, if it occurs. If it succeeds, a real accomplishment will have been registered. It should begin its operation without tactical nuclear weapons, and without any great air assistance until the latter may be needed...
>
> Both air and land operations are in urgent need of more professional study, which I shall ask to have undertaken.[155]

Administration advisors argued that "in emphasizing the worst case and military options, [Acheson] failed to address Khrushchev's political demands, neglected lesser contingencies and the option of defusing the crisis through negotiation, and risked provoking an uncontrollable escalation of threat and counter-threat."[156] Administration opinion migrated into two camps: "hawks" were predisposed to clarity and confrontation, "owls" were fully aware of the uncertainty and dangers of unintended war and of foreclosing options. Note that there appeared to be no "doves". In effect, the Acheson advice came off as alarmist because of its stark contrast with the accurate but opaque analysis the Administration

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Richardson, 211.

had received up to that point.

Regardless of the strengths or weaknesses of Acheson's advice, it began a trend away from political theory toward a more somber view of the reality of a military conflict between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. -- only a matter of days before a U.S.-planned covert operation was to take place in Cuba. Acheson's advice, with its strong criticism of negotiations, was in such contrast to the State Department's advice, that it stymied the Administration. Acheson was a persuasive man with a strong personality and much experience. He was difficult for the President to ignore. He would be even more difficult to ignore when the upcoming U.S. performance in Cuba would prove his advice on that endeavor to have been correct in all respects.

On 5 April, Henry Kissinger recommended to the White House that the President visit Berlin to show his personal interest in the situation. On that same day, President Kennedy and a large delegation, including the Secretaries of State, Treasury and Defense among others, met with British Prime Minister MacMillan. Dean Acheson presented his views to the group. His ideas dominated the discussion: the U.S. needed to prepare for military action to test Soviet will in Berlin. There was general agreement that the allies had nothing to bring to the table with which to negotiate. Acheson asserted that Khrushchev was trying to divide the allies and that the real problem was reunifying Germany. Upon Lord Home's statement that the right of conquest was wearing thin in Berlin, Acheson suggested that perhaps it was Western power which was wearing thin.[157]

The next day, the talks with the British Prime Minister continued. It was agreed that there was no bargaining position and Foy Kohler advised that the U.S. should do everything possible not to have to negotiate on Berlin. President Kennedy contended that, on the

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[157] William C. Burdett, "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 36-40.

contrary, a negotiating position *did* need to be developed, *and* Acheson's suggestions needed to be considered. However, Kohler pointed out that every conceivable plan had been "staffed out," that developing a negotiating position was not the problem. He lamented the fact that there was no satisfactory solution.[158] It is apparent that Acheson's views had influenced Kohler.

Martin Hillenbrand was not present at the meetings with the Prime Minister. It appeared however, that the President was beginning to take the Hillenbrand view, despite Acheson's analysis and Kohler's reservations. In a telephone interview conducted on 14 March 1997, Hillenbrand expressed that Kohler eventually acquiesced to the need for negotiations as well, not to allow the Soviets to make gains, but to "draw the situation out," diffusing tensions. This contradicted Schlesinger's characterization of Kohler as a "complete Achesonian," and eventually became the party line at the State Department from Rusk on down. It is noteworthy that during this period of the debate, the seriousness of the refugee problem was discussed only briefly, practically as an afterthought.

By this time, reports of an impending invasion of Cuba had begun to leak to the press, and on 7 April 1961, the day after the MacMillan visit, Castro issued a call to arms. Conrad Adenauer was scheduled to visit Washington in five days. The radar scope was beginning to clutter.

At this juncture, President Kennedy began an earnest attempt to establish the commitment to which each of the allies had agreed in the event a formal blockade of Berlin might be undertaken by either the Soviets or the East Zone. Although the distraction of Cuba was intense, allied commitment was foremost in Kennedy's mind during meetings with Chancellor Adenauer on the occasion of the latter's 13 April visit to Washington. The

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[158] Ibid., 41-44.

Chancellor informed President Kennedy that Germany, "was prepared to do everything that appeared necessary in the interest of this joint cause."[159] Foreign Minister Brentano estimated that the Soviets would not conduct another blockade but believed that they would sign a separate peace treaty turning over the GDR to the puppet East German government. He believed that contingency plans needed to proceed with this eventuality in mind. There was protracted discussion of the confusing points of international law regarding Berlin, primarily focusing on the threat to access.[160]

It is interesting that although the bulk of the analysis received to this point indicated that the Soviets were not interested in a military confrontation, the principal actors began to get bogged down in the worst case scenario of a Soviet move in Berlin. The idea that a separate peace treaty was inevitable and that this would constitute a Soviet gain which would eventually be followed by further aggressive gestures became accepted as a *fait accomplis*. So, although the Administration's remarks began to indicate that there was in fact a crisis in progress, the need to create a crisis management decision making unit to focus on Berlin was still not perceived, nor was the President advised to consider such an action. Meanwhile, the question that Thompson had wanted to have posed to Chancellor Adenauer regarding suggested actions in the event of border closure never came up. Then the distraction of the Bay of Pigs invasion set in.

As the President and others in the inner circle were temporarily pulled away from the Berlin problem, discussion continued. On 15 April, as the Bay of Pigs invasion was getting underway, Secretary Rusk, Martin Hillenbrand and German Ambassador Grewe met in Rusk's office to discuss Berlin contingency planning. Among the details, Secretary Rusk

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[159] Martin Hillenbrand, "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 47.

[160] Ibid., 49-50.

made a few very telling remarks. Said Rusk,

> The governments involved should consider these matters at the highest policy level, not just at the planning level, as if plans had nothing to do with policy. Although all decisions could not be made in advance, there must be agreement on the policies which should govern. In an actual crisis, governments could not start from the beginning with their discussion of policies and plans. There is now a gap between our plans and our policies.[161]

Rusk expressed concern over the lack of discussions among the four powers (U.S., Britain, France and Germany). He expressed to Ambassador Grewe that, "As the new American Administration comes in...some of the nuances of the past may not be present and the approach may at first seem a little over-simplified."[162]

Considering the seriousness of the situation, Rusks remarks are concerning. The Administration did not cultivate strong professional relationships with the IC or career Department of State personnel (other than Acheson -- merely a consultant) who could have imparted the required current institutional knowledge to deal effectively with the crisis. With this in mind, Rusk appeared curiously nonchalant. He did not seem to feel any responsibility for the gap between plans and policy even though he recognized its existence. He should have considered himself the *bridge* across that gap. He should have used State Department resources to support the President more aggressively. Now his captain was unknowingly taking the ship of state into an enemy minefield. From the beginning, Kennedy had spent three and a half months in a reactionary mode on Berlin and was now on the brink of being dealt a huge setback in Cuba.

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[161] Martin Hillenbrand, "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 53.

[162] Ibid., 54.

THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION

Analyzing the failure at the Bay of Pigs could fill volumes. However, what we are interested in is how the presidential decision making process with regard to Berlin was affected by this event. Hence, the following discussion is necessarily brief.

With the President's attention completely focused on Cuba, two things occurred. First, his focus shifted from Berlin for several days. Second, the way in which he worked with his advisors during the Bay of Pigs situation revealed much about the presidential decision making process in general, and the effectiveness of the IC in particular.

Recall that Kennedy had basically accepted the invasion planning process and timetable from the Eisenhower Administration during the early transition period. As the date of the operation drew near however, he began to become anxious. About a week before the invasion, the President telephoned his brother and said that he was going to send someone from CIA over to brief him on the upcoming operation. Bobby Kennedy received this brief that same afternoon from Dick Bissel, the CIA's Deputy Director of Plans. Said Bobby Kennedy,

> [Bissel] told me about the fact that they were thinking of an invasion -- or they were planning an invasion -- and the invasion was scheduled to take place the following week. He outlined it to me and thought that there was a great chance of success and that they should go ahead with it. He was enthusiastic about it. He said -- this was a very important factor in my mind and I think, in the President's -- he said it really can't be a failure, because once they land on the beach, even if as a military force they don't win, they can always stay in Cuba and be guerrillas. They'll cause Castro so much difficulty. It'll be a very important factor in bringing about his downfall. [Bissell] said this was guerrilla territory and that they'd all been trained for guerrilla action. This was a natural place to have a landing. Obviously, there was a chance they'd be overcome by the military forces of Castro; but even if that happened as a military action, they could easily become guerrillas and fight in that area and also take to the mountains. These [men] were very well trained, and that would be a very important factor.[163]

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[163] Guthman and Shulman, 240.

The fact that the President brought his brother into the equation demonstrated that he believed he needed more support with the decision making process -- support he was not getting from the CIA. His lack of confidence in the way that the operation was progressing was also revealed by the fact that he sent a special emissary to Guatemala where the guerilla force was training with the CIA. A U.S. Marine Colonel, highly decorated in World War II, the emissary was personally briefed by the President on what to look for. Upon his return, the Colonel wrote a memorandum and gave a briefing claiming that he, "had never seen such an effective military force, that they had the fighting power, the techniques, and the skills."[164] He recommended very forcefully that they should go ahead with the landing, and his efforts were most instrumental in convincing the President to proceed. Bobby Kennedy supported the invasion, as did Allen Dulles, Secretary McNamara, Secretary Rusk, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others.

The invasion was of course a complete failure for numerous reasons, among them: communications problems, incorrect intelligence regarding the terrain, lack of strong leadership from the top of the CIA, and insubordination on the part of CIA operatives. Although many of the problems were beyond the President's direct control, as suggested earlier, addressing those problems occupied the Administration with internal reorganization until the Vienna summit in June drew near. Unfortunately, the reorganization distracted the Administration from focusing on the Berlin Crisis. This distraction, coupled with the already weak condition of the President's "team," led to poor preparation for Vienna. The ship of state had hit a mine and was still sailing -- crippled -- but it was also still in the minefield.

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[164] Ibid., 241.

FROM THE BAY OF PIGS TO VIENNA

Immediately after the invasion, there was a lot of second guessing and concerns within the Administration about who was loyal to the President during the crisis and what should have been done. Of course the finger pointed primarily at the CIA. Maxwell Taylor was brought in and set up his investigation panel. Members of the Taylor panel included Allen Dulles, Attorney General Kennedy, and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh A. Burke. The members disagreed as to whether or not the invasion plans had had any chance of success.[165] Of great significance, there had been tremendous communications delays during the invasion which had made it gutwrenchingly impossible for the Administration to know what was going on so as to react to redirect the outcome. This frustration was revealed when twelve-hours-old reports relayed that things were not going well. Recall Eleanor Lansing Dulles' quote at the end of Chapter 3.

As with the CIA, Kennedy also was frustrated with his military advisors during the Bay of Pigs debacle. He was already of the mindset that the military needed restructuring, and in this regard, McNamara was his point man. Kennedy's frustrations framed his relations with his military advisors during the Berlin Crisis, increasing his reliance on Maxwell Taylor. In an interview with John Bartlow Martin, in March 1964, Bobby Kennedy related this sentiment:

> The President had been used to dealing with people and having them know what they were talking about. He came into government as the successor to President Eisenhower, who was a great general, a great military figure... He retained the same people in all these key positions whom President Eisenhower had. Allen Dulles was there, Lemnitzer [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] was there, the same Joint Chiefs of Staff. He didn't attempt to move any of those people out. And these were the people who were around this table when they were making the decisions. It was on their recommendations and suggestions and their intelligence information -- what they found the

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[165] *Facts On File*, 135.

> situation to be on *their* homework -- that he based his decision.
>
> Now, he took the responsibility, which was the right thing to do. But it was based on people he had confidence in, not because he had known them himself but just because they had been there. They had had the experience; they had had the background; they were evidently trusted by his predecessor. So he thought that he could trust them.
>
> ...Well, what ultimately came out of this was that he never substituted anybody else's judgement for his own. The second thing is that, whenever a problem or question came up, he went into the facts minutely.[166]

As a result of Kennedy's growing distrust of the bureaucracy, he would actually cause it to grow. His intention was to broaden the decision making base in hopes of improving the quality of decisions. Unfortunately, these actions would serve only to muddle the process, making it more and more inefficient, especially when it came to crisis decision making.

On 23 April, as the Taylor panel was just in its inception, the Berlin Crisis was continuing, unaffected by events in Cuba. Khrushchev told the Federal Republic of Germany's Ambassador to the Soviet Union that he would sign a treaty with the GDR but not until after the West German elections in September or perhaps after the Congress of the CPSU in October.[167] Two days later, McGeorge Bundy signed a National Security Council Memorandum which recommended that the U.S. make it a matter of highest priority to increase manning, modernization of equipment, and improving mobility of NATO non-nuclear forces in Europe. Further that the U.S. "should urge rapid progress toward building up a mobile task force to deal with threats to the NATO flanks."[168] It would take more than three months before Bundy's memo would have any effect.

Although many changes were implemented as a result of the Bay of Pigs invasion, it is significant that Hillenbrand believes that -- other than Oleg Pentkovskiy's contribution -- as

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[166] Guthman and Shulman, 246-247.

[167] Charles S. Sampson, "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 55.

[168] McGeorge Bundy, "National Security Memorandum Number 40," 24 April 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

a whole, the CIA played a rather small role in the Berlin Crisis.[169] Recall from Chapter 7 that Allen Dulles had "lost touch" with CIA operations.

In National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) number 11-7-61, dated 25 April 1961, and entitled, "Soviet Short-Term Intentions Regarding Berlin and Germany," the CIA set out to "estimate probable Soviet intentions with respect to Berlin and Germany over the next six months or so." The NIE made bold assertions about Khrushchev's intentions, claiming that, "Almost certainly, Khrushchev still prefers to negotiate on this matter rather than to provoke a crisis by unilateral action, chiefly because he desires to avoid the risks of a showdown in this dangerous area of East-West confrontation."

The estimate claimed that the Soviets, "will concentrate on getting an 'interim agreement,' of the kind outlined at Geneva in 1959, which would constitute a first step toward eliminating Allied occupation rights in West Berlin." The estimate stated that if negotiations did not happen, or if they broke down, that the Soviets would eventually sign its long-threatened separate peace treaty with the GDR. Further, it stated that, "the U.S.S.R. is likely to continue to offer negotiations, always hopeful that the allies can be induced to accede peacefully to the eventual loss of the Western position in Berlin." The NIE clearly stated that the Soviet's goal was absorption of West Berlin but that it would seek to achieve this goal in stages. It is noteworthy that, as we see later, this estimate spelled out nearly exactly what Khrushchev would put forward in his conversation with Kennedy at the June Vienna summit which would surprise and discourage the President! Once again, good analysis was lost in the bureaucratic shuffle.

It is also noteworthy that the NIE indicated that the Soviets wanted to negotiate, as did many in the U.S., but Dean Acheson's advice was taking its toll. Hillenbrand asserts that

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[169] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

there were, in actuality, three positions on negotiating that emerged: 1) do not negotiate as it will weaken the NATO alliance (Acheson); 2) negotiate openly to diffuse the crisis and do not be concerned about Soviet long-term intentions with regard to West Berlin (elements of the White House Staff); and 3) negotiate as a holding operation to diffuse the crisis but do not permit a situation to occur from which the Soviets might achieve future gains (Hillenbrand).[170]

Meanwhile, in the beginning of May, despite the recent failed Cuba invasion, the atmosphere in Berlin proper appeared surprisingly content with the status quo. As the *New York Times* wrote on 6 May 1961,

> West Berlin's spring mood derives from a number of things besides the season itself. One is the post-war prosperity that has wiped out unemployment and, in fact, has created a labor shortage. Another is the seemingly unshakable faith in the Allies' guarantee of the city's freedom, renewed recently during Mayor Will Brandt's and Chancellor Adenauer's visits to Washington.
>
> A third is simply that the West Berliners have lived so long with the Soviet threat that they have come to accept it as part of their way of life.

Had the Administration been bitten by this same complacency bug?

With the Vienna summit approaching, the analysis began to be generated more rapidly. Once the various inputs were combined, the intensity of the crisis was once again revealed in stark relief. In a memorandum to the President with a cover letter dated 5 May 1961, Henry Kissinger wrote, in what he called his "preliminary reflections on Berlin" that, "the fate of Berlin is the touchstone for the future of the North Atlantic Community...The realization of the Communist proposal that Berlin become a 'free city' could well be the decisive turn in the struggle of freedom against tyranny." Further, Kissinger wrote using intrepid language that,

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[170] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

> Berlin's freedom can be maintained only if the Soviets are willing to be satisfied with essentially face-saving concessions. If the Soviets maintain their present position, the major goal of our policy will have to be to make Soviet unilateral action seem extremely risky. In other words, we must be prepared to face a showdown.[171]

Of Khrushchev's intentions, Kissinger went on to say that,

> Soviet motivations are essentially irrelevant to our policies. It is not necessary to choose in the abstract between the school of thought that claims that the issue of Berlin is primarily a device to force us into negotiations, or that which sees in it a Soviet device to stabilize its hold on Eastern Germany. Our proposals should depend not on Soviet purposes but on our own. Soviet intentions are relevant to the negotiability of certain proposals and not to their merits. The limits of the negotiable are set basically by the requirements of Berlin's freedom...
>
> Two distinct dangers to the freedom of Berlin exist: (a) A threat to the supply lines of the Allied garrison now controlled by Soviet personnel; (b) An interruption of the civilian traffic turned over to East Germany in 1955 following the Geneva summit meeting and since then regulated by technical negotiations between the Federal Republic and the GDR...
>
> United States policy with respect to the peace treaty should be that this measure is a way of precipitating a crisis, not a document creating a new legal situation...The cause of a showdown should be the fact of interruption or harassment to Berlin, not the signing of a peace treaty.
>
> The United States should not undertake <u>any</u> military step without a prior decision on whether we are prepared to employ nuclear weapons and if so, how. Western contingency planning has been almost completely deficient in this respect.[172]

Kissinger's analysis, if taken seriously, should have triggered some very solemn questions. First, he declared that we should prepare for a showdown. Would not preparations for a showdown indicate that the U.S. was already in a crisis? Second, he declared that we should not make military preparations without planning for nuclear war. Would not those plans, soberly initiated, indicate that the U.S. was already in a crisis? Would not the "interruption or harassment" to Berlin simply signal an increase in the intensity

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[171] Memorandum, Henry Kissinger to President Kennedy, 5 May 1961, "Germany-Berlin General Kissinger Report 5/5/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[172] Ibid.

of an already-existing crisis? Although this might appear to be a matter of semantics, Kissinger's attitude reflected the principle of "cognitive consistency" discussed in Chapter 5. That attitude was that a state of crisis did not yet exist, that it was something still on the horizon.

The same day as the Kissinger memorandum, the White House also received the response that McGeorge Bundy's memo of 25 April had requested from Secretary of Defense McNamara. President Kennedy had requested a "prompt report on the current military planning for a possible crisis over Berlin." The McNamara memo detailed a Joint Chiefs of Staff review of Berlin contingency planning with specific attention paid to the Acheson memo (3 April 1961) and its discussion of the use of force:

> Although, as the Joint Chiefs report, the unilateral military planning "within existing capabilities and national policy guidance" is satisfactory, the national policy guidance is not. NSC 5803, dated February 7, 1958, on which Berlin Contingency Planning is based, does not reflect new developments in U.S. strategic thinking. Specifically, NSC 5803 implies the U.S. "will be prepared to go immediately to general war after using only limited military force to attempt to reopen access to Berlin." This is inconsistent with current thinking which proposes the use of substantial conventional force before considering resort to nuclear weapons and other general war measures. An early restatement of our national policy with regard to Berlin Contingency Planning is desirable...
>
> ...we should not overlook the likelihood of an uprising in East Germany and other satellite countries should a sizable and active allied military movement in East Germany take place. There is a need for an immediate assessment of our capability to use and support special forces and guerrilla-type operations and to coordinate them properly with normal military action.
>
> In summary, I believe that:
>
> a. The Chiefs' studies will help resolve three of the questions raised by Mr. Acheson in his memorandum.
>
> b. We must urgently re-examine the national policy guidance on which our unilateral U.S. planning is based, and translate this U.S. policy guidance into agreed tripartite policy.
>
> c. We must arrange for participation by the Federal Republic of Germany in Berlin Contingency Planning.
>
> d. The full potential for U.S. and non-U.S. "special operations" should be developed and coordinated with our planned military actions.
>
> We shall initiate recommendations to the NSC to permit the accomplishment of

items b, c, and d.[173]

So, after only a few weeks, punctuated by the Bay of Pigs invasion, several key assumptions were pieced together by the Administration: 1) Negotiations could be harmful to the NATO alliance (Acheson); 2) At best, negotiations were limited by Berlin's freedom (Kissinger); 3) The U.S.S.R. eventually intended to take West Berlin from the allies (CIA); 4) The taking of West Berlin could cause the Western alliance to collapse and the U.S. needed to be prepared to face a showdown to dissuade the Soviets from attempting a takeover (Kissinger); 5) Before *any* military action, the U.S. had to decide if it was prepared to use nuclear weapons (Kissinger); and, 6) The U.S. would have only the military option of using nuclear weapons if it did not undertake a substantial conventional forces buildup which would require a change to its current policy (McNamara, et. al.)

After assimilating these assumptions, President Kennedy began to recognize the need for decisive, comprehensive action on a large scale and he began to turn his efforts toward preparing for the Vienna summit. On that same day (5 May 1961), President Kennedy drafted a letter to President de Gaulle discussing arrangements for the summit.

It is interesting that one of the steps taken by Dean Rusk at the State Department as a reaction to the Bay of Pigs fiasco was to establish a special "crisis center." Known as the Special Operations Center, it was designed to help the Secretary of State and the President get information and recommendations quickly in the face of fast-breaking world developments. The facility was configured for twenty-four hour operation and was located next to Department headquarters on the seventh floor of the State Department building, only a minute's walk from the Secretary's office. There were bunks for those on night alert. The

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[173] Memorandum, Robert McNamara to President Kennedy, 5 May 1961, "Germany-Berlin General Report By The Joint Chiefs of Staff Part I 5/5/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

center was staffed with six Foreign Service Officers divided up into two teams. Interestingly enough, one group was working on South Vietnam, the other, Cuba. There was initially no Berlin group. The Center was expected to draw on special duty personnel from CIA and the Department of Defense. It was not expected to have a large permanent staff. The Center was supposed to have three primary tasks: 1) To pull together, as soon as possible, all available data -- surveys, position papers, current intelligence reports and the like -- on the problem at hand; 2) To press for the earliest possible recommendations on policy to deal with the crisis to the Secretary of State and the President; and, 3) To follow up on decisions to see that they were carried out quickly and efficiently.

The Center was to take the place of the Operations Coordination Board previously responsible for insuring that decisions of the National Security Council were carried out.[174] At face value, the Center seemed like a good idea, but its benefit was never realized in the case of Berlin, although it was eventually activated on Berlin's behalf.

As the Kennedy Administration began to shift its focus to the Vienna summit, the NATO Council of Ministers was concluding its conference in Oslo, Norway. At the beginning of the conference, Berlin had not been the top item on the agenda, but as the conference drew to a close on 8 May, the international community as a whole began to view the situation in Berlin as one of "crisis" dimensions once again. Secretary of State Rusk made the statement that should, "the Soviet Union proceed to sign a peace treaty [with the GDR], the Allies would insist on continued Western rights of access to West Berlin. They would make it clear...that this unilateral act by the Russians could not affect Western rights in Berlin, which the Allied powers are determined to continue to exercise."[175] It was at Oslo that the Western allies began to publicly discuss their intentions to improve conventional

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[174] *New York Times*, 7 May 1961.

[175] *New York Times*, 9 May 1961.

forces so that atomic weapons would be used only as a last resort. Dean Rusk strongly asserted that the West would not tolerate further setbacks in Berlin.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Adenauer's government in Bonn had drafted a formal rejection of the Soviet proposal for talks with them about a German peace treaty. The Soviet memorandum, which had actually been delivered back on 17 February, was a "mixture of blandishments and threats, all posed with a minimum of the usual diplomatic subtleties."[176] Chancellor Adenauer's draft reply was being considered by the governments of the U.S., Britain and France. The big question, once again, was whether or not to negotiate with the Soviets.

The West German Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Dr. Hans Kroll, having recently returned from his 23 April visit with Khrushchev, was just beginning to spread "the conviction that the renewed crisis over Berlin would not be set off until after the mid-September elections in West Germany and perhaps not until after the Soviet Communist Party Congress in October."[177] The ambiguity of the existence of a crisis continued.

On 10 May, Henry Kissinger -- referred to by the *New York Times* as "an adviser to President Kennedy on military strategy" -- conferred with Bonn's Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss. Said the *Times*,

> The West Germans have a great deal to discuss with Dr. Kissinger. They credit him with inspiring what they believe to be a new emerging United States defense concept based on the possibility of limited war against Communist aggression.
>
> As the West Germans see it, Washington's emphasis on the build-up of conventional weapons is part of this concept.
>
> "It would give me holy terrors," Herr Strauss said during a recent Parliamentary debate on the defense budget, "If I were to hear that a conventional attack was to be met only with conventional weapons.
>
> West German leaders have permitted and even encouraged the

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[176] *New York Times*, 8 May 1961.

[177] Ibid.

conviction that atomic retaliation would meet any Communist incursion, small or big.[178]

On 11 May, the CIA's "Current Intelligence Weekly Summary" stated that, "Khrushchev has committed himself to a solution during 1961." On the same day, in East Berlin, the Soviet military commander was replaced, giving rise to some suspicions that preparations were being made for turnover to the East Germans. The West, in the NATO communiqué published at the end of the Oslo meeting, "reaffirmed their conviction that a peaceful and just solution for the problem of Germany, including Berlin, is to be found only on the basis of self-determination."[179] The problem with this lofty but unrealistic conviction was that if Germany would have taken action based on its desire for self-determination, the result would *not* have been peaceful.

On 16 May, the President received a letter from Khrushchev, dated 12 May, which expressed his desire that Vienna would be "a general exchange of views." The next day, in a note to McGeorge Bundy from Henry Owen of the National Security Council, Owen wrote that, "The importance of the stakes and the direct confrontation of U.S. and Soviet forces make [Berlin] a more likely *casus belli* than anything else on the horizon."[180]

It was about at this point that the press came alive with discussion of the upcoming summit. The Department of State began generating issue papers for the President with "talking points" on a number of different issues. On 20 May, de Gaulle flew to Bonn for talks with Adenauer intended to unify the allied position on several topics. The President and

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[178] *New York Times*, 11 May 1961.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Memorandum, Henry Owen to McGeorge Bundy, 17 May 1961, "Germany-Berlin General 5/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

the Chancellor were reported to have reached "particularly complete agreement" on Berlin.[181] Adenauer expressed complete confidence in Kennedy, saying that, "he considered Germany's interests to be 'in good hands'."[182] Soviet officials in Geneva expressed their desire to "remove misunderstandings" in Vienna, and they repeated their argument for the principle of neutrality with a new slogan: "No export of revolution by Moscow, but no export of counter-revolution by Washington either."[183]

In a "Scope Paper" prepared for the President by the Department of State (author unknown), the U.S. objectives of the summit were spelled out:

> A. To improve the prospects of finding an acceptable and workable basis for improving relations with the Soviet Union.
>
> B. To impress on Khrushchev our capacity and resolve to resist Soviet and Communist encroachments if he is unwilling to seek a satisfactory basis for better relations and to stress the dangers attendant on continued, sharp confrontations between the two countries.
>
> C. To communicate to Khrushchev the President's understanding and grasp of the world situation, in an historical as well as immediate sense, and his capacity and intent to influence the course of world events.
>
> D. To gain a clearer understanding of Khrushchev as a man and of Soviet policy and intentions.[184]

The paper went on to describe the goals Khrushchev would probably seek and some tactics that might have been useful for the President to pursue. It stated that Khrushchev, "will undoubtedly press hard his position on Berlin and a peace treaty with East Germany and will

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[181] *New York Times*, 21 May 1961.

[182] *New York Times*, 22 May 1961.

[183] *New York Times*, 23 May 1961.

[184] "President's Meeting With Khrushchev - Vienna, June 3-4, 1961: Scope Paper," 23 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

try to get some form of commitment to negotiate the Berlin question."[185] Significant is the point that the decision as to whether or not the U.S. would actually negotiate was not made.

Another "Talking Points" paper (author unknown) dated that same day stated that, "Aspects of the situation in Berlin and Germany are unsatisfactory to the Western powers as well as to the Soviet Union but nothing is intolerable to either; the security interests of the Soviet Union are not threatened." This paper went on to say, "The wisest course is to leave the situation alone until arms reduction makes solutions easier."[186]

The point papers completely missed several critical details. Among these were the Soviets' strong dissatisfaction with the status quo, and the security threat posed to the Soviet Union by the refugee flow in Berlin. They simply overlooked this altogether. All of the previous advice from Ambassador Thompson, Ambassador Grewe, and others fell by the wayside. Also, they did not prepare the President to respond to any Soviet ultimatums. And finally, these papers did not make it into the hands of the President until 26 May, giving him very little time to digest them and ask questions prior to travelling.

On the evening of 23 May in Moscow, Ambassador Thompson had dinner with Khrushchev, at the latter's insistence. Khrushchev reiterated the point that he had made with Kroll that if no agreement was reached on Berlin, the U.S.S.R. would sign a separate peace treaty in the fall or winter after German elections and probably after the party congress. He was convinced that this would not lead to war, and that German reunification was impossible, that in fact no one really wanted it, including de Gaulle, MacMillan and Adenauer. On the subject of the refugee "problem," Khrushchev told Thompson that "Berlin was a running sore

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[185] Ibid.

[186] "President's Meeting With Khrushchev: Talking Points," 23 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform], 5.

which had to be eliminated."[187] On the subject of access, Khrushchev, "repeated categorically [that] our access would be prevented. He said they would not touch our troops in Berlin but [that] they might have to tighten their belts. He said however they would not impose [a] blockade."[188]

Perhaps the most revealing remark made by Khrushchev was to the effect that although the U.S. might be satisfied with the status quo, the U.S.S.R. was not and that if it did not change by fall or winter of that year, Soviet prestige would be damaged.[189]

In another telegram, sent later the same day, from Thompson to Secretary Rusk, the Ambassador dispensed with concerns that there might be any internal leadership struggles within the Soviet Union. Thompson related that Khrushchev's colleagues may attempt to unseat him if they felt Khrushchev was taking actions which might lead to war. Thompson believed that the U.S.S.R. had successfully manipulated world opinion to create the impression that the West was saying no to a proposal that would avoid war. He went on to discuss the need to negotiate until the West could agree on "some positive position." He closed by stating that he strongly believed that a separate peace treaty would lead to a "really major crisis."

In a telegram to Secretary Rusk the next day, 25 May, the U.S. Mission Director in Berlin, Allan Lightner, stated that the, "Sov[iets] could live with [the] Berlin status quo for some time." Further, Lightner went on to say, "In sum, Vienna will be [a] psychological testing ground and [the] U.S position on Berlin in my view should be molded carefully to create [the] strongest possible impression on Khrushchev of U.S. firmness of intention on

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[187] Telegram, Ambassador Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 24 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

Berlin in [an] effort to deter him further from [the] course of action he has been threatening since November 1958."[190] Who to believe, Thompson (Khrushchev) or Lightner?

The next day, Senator Mike Mansfield sent a memorandum to President Kennedy with the subject line, "Observations on the Forthcoming Talks in Vienna." In it he said that, "our record in foreign relations since January, in my opinion, leaves much to be desired...the bureaucracy is still little improved over the Eisenhower days."[191] Mansfield expressed concern that the talks might degenerate into a verbal slug-fest, saying,

> I am disturbed by the reports which have reached me that Thompson says Khrushchev intends to take a very hard and tough line at Vienna. If these reports are reliable, I recommend strongly that you convey to Khrushchev at once, in an appropriate fashion, the idea that you are going to Vienna for serious, sober, frank but quiet preliminary discussions of the problems of peace, without a chip on you shoulder. Further, I would let him know in polite but unmistakable fashion that unless he is of a similar mind it is not too late to cancel the meeting until a more appropriate time.[192]

Obviously, the President chose to disregard the Senator's advice.

McGeorge Bundy put together a bundle of reading material for Kennedy on 26 May so that the President could begin preparation in earnest. It included memoranda of conversation, conference information, all Thompson's dispatches, CIA analysis of Khrushchev's character and style, and the talking papers on Paris and Vienna which Bundy had just received that day (!). So, although much of the above analysis and advice was generated over time, Kennedy got much of it late, and all at one time.

On 27 May, Thompson sent another telegram expressing concern about the

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[190] Telegram, Ambassador Lightner to Secretary Rusk, 25 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[191] Memorandum, Senator Mansfield to President Kennedy, 26 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[192] Ibid.

recommendations some of his colleagues were making to the President. He stated that he believed Khrushchev had so deeply committed his personal prestige and that of the U.S.S.R. to some action on the Berlin and German problems, that if the U.S. were to take a completely negative stand, as suggested by his colleagues in Germany, "this would probably lead to developments in which chances of war or ignominious Western retreat are close to 50-50."[193]

On 29 May, Bundy gave the President a memorandum answering questions about various nuances among the bundle of advice which was given him on the 26th. He also attached a paper written by Hillenbrand, informing Kennedy that Hillenbrand would be in Vienna and that he was "an able man." Two days later, Kennedy touched down in Paris for talks with de Gaulle before continuing on to Vienna to meet with Khrushchev.

In concluding this section, it should become apparent that there was an almost frantic sense of eleventh hour analysis leading up to Vienna. Others throughout the government realized rather late that the summit was extremely important and appeared to make a "last ditch effort" to get the President up to speed. The archives show in excruciating detail that the Administration was "behind the power curve." Kennedy, as mentioned earlier, was not managing the situation as a crisis (i.e., involving the significant risk of war), but merely as a foreign policy problem. The decision making process was not streamlined, the State Department's Special Operations Center was not doing what it was supposed to do, and as the President made every effort to get up to speed, the Soviet Union kept its firm grasp on the initiative. The question of what to do in the event that the Soviets secured the east-west border in Berlin had become lost in a sea of seemingly more important yet unanswered questions.

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[193]Telegram, Ambassador Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 27 May 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

THE VIENNA SUMMIT

The visit with de Gaulle was positive and Kennedy pressed on to Vienna. After lunch on the second day of the two-day summit (3-4 June), Kennedy held a private conversation with Khrushchev. The conversation was brief and the tone rapidly decayed from less than cordial to counterproductive. Kennedy initiated the exchange aggressively. Khrushchev expressed concern that the U.S. was attempting to humiliate the Soviet Union, but that he would be glad if the U.S. were to agree to an interim arrangement with some time limit so that the prestige and interests of the two countries would not be involved or prejudiced. Khrushchev blamed the U.S. for increasing the prospects of war between the two countries claiming the decision to sign a peace treaty was firm and irrevocable and that the Soviet Union would sign it in December if the U.S. refused the interim agreement. The interim agreement which Khrushchev envisioned would have threatened U.S. access but Khrushchev maintained that borders would not be affected and that if the U.S. wanted war, that was its problem. President Kennedy rather unimpressively concluded the conversation by observing that it would be a cold winter.[194]

FROM VIENNA TO THE WALL

"The Bay of Pigs disaster and Khrushchev's assertive behavior at their summit meeting in Vienna exacerbated Kennedy's concern that Khrushchev regarded him as weak and irresolute and that this could lead the Soviet leader to miscalculate and take actions that could lead to war."[195] As mentioned earlier, the President took significant action as a result of Vienna, building a large analysis and decision making machine which included many people,

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[194] Mr. Akalovsky (interpreter), "Memorandum of Conversation," 4 June 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[195] Alexander L. George, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 112.

from academics, to government officials, to diplomats. From a crisis management standpoint however, his actions did not make the decision making process more efficient. In fact, quite the contrary was true. Wrote Grimm, "I suspect that a real crisis decision-making forum would have drastically reduced the number of actors which would thereby increase efficiency and camouflage the drama."[196]

On 7 June, Kennedy met with Congressional leadership to brief them on the summit. He stated that he believed Khrushchev would probably sign a peace treaty, and that if he did, the U.S. would simply not accept it. The Soviets had given the Kennedy team an aide memoire which Kennedy subsequently passed on to the State Department so that they could draft a response. The administrative process of drafting this response created more pressure between the State Department and the White House staff as it was apparently significantly delayed by bureaucratic negligence. According to Hillenbrand, the draft response was forwarded to the White House for approval in a timely manner but was subsequently locked in a safe by a staff member who then went on vacation for two weeks! The second draft which was then sent over was misplaced.[197] Arthur Schlesinger blamed the State Department for the delay and further referred to the draft, once it eventually was received, as, "a tired and turgid rehash of documents left over from the Berlin crisis of 1958-59."[198]

On 13 June, the first of a series of SNIEs was released describing "Soviet and Other Reactions to Various Courses of Action Regarding Berlin." It discussed four possible courses of action in the event of an unacceptable degree of Soviet or East German interference with Western access to West Berlin: "(a) a substantial effort to maintain ground access to West Berlin by a limited military action; (b) a substantial effort to maintain air access; (c) other

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[196] Grimm, 17.

[197] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 3 March 1997.

[198] Schlesinger, 384.

pressures and reprisals against the USSR and East Germany; and (d) large-scale preparations for general war."[199]

There was a furious search for creative solutions to the crisis which resulted in memoranda from wide and varied individuals. Walt Rostow's brother, Gene, Dean of Yale Law School contributed. Ambassador Thompson, unsurprisingly, provided fresh analysis which included the statement that, if no solution was reached during a period after entry into force of a separate treaty and interference with allied access, "we should then proceed with military action, including the use of tactical atomic weapons."[200] Wrote Walt Rostow,

> Essentially, Khrushchev's strategy comes to this: he exerts pressure at some point on our side of the line; by such pressure he creates a situation in which we can only reply at the risk of starting a nuclear war or escalating in that direction; faced with this prospect, we look for compromise; he backs down a little; and a compromise is struck which, on balance, moves his line forward, and shifts us back... we must be prepared to increase the risk of war on his side of the line as well as facing it on ours.[201]

On 28 June, a thirty-one page paper was submitted by Dean Acheson. At its crux: concern that the Kennedy Administration should make early decisions about when and under what circumstances to resort to the use of force.

On 29 June, Kennedy called a meeting of the National Security Council to consider a report prepared by the Department of State. The report recommended a vigorous response to any challenge to allied access, to include military measures. Kennedy wanted more information and ordered a joint study between State and Defense. Dean Acheson was

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[199] CIA, SNIE 2-61, "Soviet and Other Reactions to Various Courses of Action Regarding Berlin," 13 June 1961, 1.

[200] Memorandum, Ambassador Thompson to Secretary Rusk, 19 June 1961, *The Berlin Crisis 1958-1962* [microform].

[201] Memorandum, Walt Rostow to President Kennedy, 26 June 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 6/23/61-6/28/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

requested to pursue negotiations (!). The State-Defense group was led by Foy Kohler and became known as the Berlin Task Force. It met on a daily basis (one hour or more) in the White House for the next few months. The Special Operations Center at the State Department now turned its focus on Berlin.

According to Grimm, there was some discord within the Task Force at the White House over differences in policy, but also on a more personal and emotional level because, "many of the people involved in State and Defense were getting acquainted under intense pressure."[202] This corresponds to what we know about the "team." The Berlin Task Force was responsible to a Steering Committee chaired by Secretary Rusk. Other members of the Steering Committee were the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of the CIA, the Director of the U.S. Information Agency, the Chairman of the JCS, Maxwell Taylor and McGeorge Bundy. Said Bobby Kennedy, "we set up the Steering Committee to be a smaller group that was to do what the [National] Security Council was supposed to have done when it was originally formed."[203] In addition to these groups, there was also an Ambassadorial Group which met every afternoon.

As the summer progressed, it became clear that the management of the situation was an American show. Adenauer and de Gaulle were not interested in negotiations. MacMillan went along with Kennedy.

Meanwhile, the analysis continued to flow into the White House. Roger Hilsman, from the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research produced input. Henry Owen suggested having President Eisenhower get involved as a means of neutralizing partisan attacks on the Administration's foreign policy decisions (when they eventually made some.) Owen was later brought onto the White House staff. Military mobilization plans began to be

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[202] Grimm, 17.

[203] Guthman and Shulman, 272.

considered in earnest. Henry Kissinger wrote Bundy urging that the U.S. should now define its nuclear options and that he feared the military might try to force the hand of the President during a crisis. He recommended that the Defense Department be asked to "submit a plan for graduated nuclear response even if the Joint Chiefs do not consider it the optimum strategy."[204]

As an aside, in discussions which occurred while the President was in Hyannis Port on 8 July, the President tasked Maxwell Taylor with arranging "an early meeting of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Committee [which would occur on 18 July 1961] to obtain a new recommendation on the reorganization of the CIA assuming that new legislation is to be sought."[205] The aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion was still on the radar scope.

That same day (8 July), referring to earlier increases in U.S. defense appropriations, Khrushchev announced a thirty-four percent increase in Soviet military expenditure, reversing policy of the previous year.[206] On 10 July, McNamara announced an urgent review of U.S. military strength to develop actual cost estimates of a conventional forces buildup. The mental transition from "problem" to "crisis" had begun, and it quickly spread from the government, to the press.

On 11 July, SNIE 2-2-61 was released within the government. Its purpose was to provide an estimate of,

> the probable reactions of the U.S.S.R., Communist China, the NATO members, and certain other countries to a set of measures reflecting U.S. determination to preserve the Western position in Berlin. These measures include military, political, economic, and clandestine preparations designed

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[204] Memorandum, Henry Kissinger to McGeorge Bundy, 7 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/7/61-7/12/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[205] Memorandum, Maxwell Taylor to President Kennedy, 12 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/7/61-7/12/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[206] Richardson, 212.

> both to convey US intentions to undertake steps up to and including, if necessary, general war, and to put the US in a position to carry out these steps.

Regarding the Soviet leaders attitude toward war, the SNIE stated that, "We continue to believe that, so long as they remain vulnerable to U.S. strategic power, they will not willingly enter into situations in which, by their calculations, the risks of general war are substantial." The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, added his personal conclusion as a footnote to this statement: "...and will endeavor to draw back from such situations should they evolve."

The next day, former President Eisenhower stated that the United States must stand firmly in Berlin and "not let anybody scare us out."[207] The former President described the situation as "explosive" and also declared that Americans should be united behind the President on foreign aid and defense.

At the President's direction, the Berlin Task Force began preparing "a combined check list of possible actions relating to Berlin which should be considered for implementation in the present and emerging situation...[which would] show for each action the lead time of decision."[208] Meanwhile, within NATO, representatives from the U.S., Britain and France drafted parallel notes condemning the proposed Soviet peace treaty as a step being "taken without the consent of the German people," and "in total disregard of the rights of the people of West Berlin."[209] The U.S. version of the note, delivered to the Soviets on 17 July, was described by the *New York Times* as "firm without being

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[207] *New York Times*, 12 July 1961.

[208] Ibid., Memorandum, Maxwell Taylor to President Kennedy, 12 July 1961.

[209] *New York Times*, 13 July 1961.

bellicose."[210]

Senator Hubert Humphrey stated that the Communist bloc was grappling with staggering food shortages and that this might be behind the Soviet Union's pressure on West Berlin. He described Khrushchev's drive on Berlin, as "part of an effort to cover up the massive food problem in his wobbly empire."[211]

The next day, the Defense Minister Strauss of West Germany met with Robert McNamara at the Pentagon. Strauss negotiated the purchase of 165 million dollars worth of military equipment, including Pershing missiles and F-104 jet fighters. Strauss would say at a press conference on 1 August, that he believed the U.S.S.R. might risk "city guerilla warfare" in Berlin.[212]

In an unsigned memorandum entitled "Berlin Decisions" (presumably drafted by Kohler and the Berlin Task Force), "immediate" and "more long-range" decisions were outlined. The memorandum stated that these decisions needed to be made, "very soon as a basis for early allied consultations."[213] It listed the following as immediate decisions:

1. Military. The rate and timing of immediate military preparations.
2. Economic. The proposals regarding sanctions that we will now make to our allies and the tactic of our approach.
3. Political. Our allies will want early decisions on two points:
   (a) What should be our posture toward negotiations in the early stages of the crisis?
   (b) What should be our posture toward East German personnel along the access routes after a treaty?

That day (17 July), Kennedy, Rusk, McNamara, the Secretary of the Treasury, Bobby Kennedy, Maxwell Taylor, Ted Sorensen and McGeorge Bundy met at the White House.

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[210] *New York Times*, 18 July 1961.

[211] *New York Times*, 14 July 1961.

[212] Grimm, 25.

[213] Memorandum, unsigned, 17 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/15/61-7/17/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

The cost of the military force buildup for Berlin was discussed. A price tag of about 4.5 billion dollars was expected. This would include Civil Defense, three STRAF divisions, the possible provision of 64,000 additional men to fill out U.S. NATO forces, and the ability to accommodate large-scale troop call up under a declaration of national emergency (not expected immediately).[214] The second major item which was discussed was the need to develop a common negotiating position with the allies. Discussion of the U.S. position was inconclusive. Rusk stated that self-determination should be emphasized and that, "probably we would wish to spin out the discussion in order to make it difficult for Mr. Khrushchev to proceed with concrete steps at an early stage."[215]

The next day, in a press conference, Kennedy stated that, "The world knows that there is no reason for a crisis over Berlin today -- and that, if one develops, it will be caused by the Soviet Government's attempt to invade the rights of others and manufacture tensions."[216]

In a memorandum of conversation between Walt Rostow and Soviet Ambassador M. A. Menshikov, Rostow declared that "this is our week of crucial decision on Berlin."[217] The National Security Council met two days later to deliberate the final decisions. The final comment at the bottom of a memorandum entitled "This Afternoon's Meetings," from Bundy to the President (which was no doubt waiting on Kennedy's desk when he arrived at the Oval Office that day), stated simply, "This is probably the most important NSC meeting that we

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[214] McGeorge Bundy, "Memorandum of Meeting on Berlin, July 17, 1961," "Germany - Berlin General" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Grimm, 21. Also, on 18 July, SNIE 2-3-61, entitled "Probable Soviet Reaction to a Western Embargo," was delivered to the government.

[217] W. W. Rostow, "Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador M. A. Menshikov, USSR. Monday, July 17, 1961," 18 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/18/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

have had, and there is no reason why it cannot be continued tomorrow if you wish."[218]

Following the NSC meeting, Kennedy received a few pieces of analysis from people giving him last minute advice before he would announce his decisions to the American public. Henry Kissinger delivered some very philosophical, political advice in a five page memorandum entitled, "Some Rough Thoughts on the President's TV Speech." Walt Rostow, more concisely described what he called "A High Noon Stance on Berlin." In that memorandum, Rostow stated that, "I do believe we must be prepared in our minds for the possibility of a relatively lonely stage; and we should accept it without throwing our sheriff's badge in the dust when the crisis subsides."[219]

Finally, on 25 July, Kennedy announced his chosen U.S. policy in a television speech to the nation. As summarized by Richardson, he "announced significant measures to increase the readiness of the non-nuclear forces and their deployment in Europe, also indicating that the response to any Soviet move might not be confined to central Europe but would take account of Soviet vulnerabilities elsewhere."[220] Kennedy vowed to implement increases in the regular armed forces by larger draft calls and lengthened terms of service. Equipment would be taken out of mothballs and a civil defense program was to be implemented. However awkward it may have been, the crisis management decision making process had been exercised at last.

Two days passed before Khrushchev saw a translated copy of Kennedy's television address. When he read it, his reaction was described by one Soviet official as "a fair-sized explosion." Khrushchev went on to say, "what nonsense this all was; that war, if it came,

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[218] Memorandum, McGeorge Bundy to President Kennedy, 19 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/19/61-7/22/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[219] Memorandum, Walt Rostow to President Kennedy, 22 July 1961, "Germany - Berlin General 7/19/61-7/22/61" folder, National Security Files, box 81, JFKL.

[220] Richardson, 211.

would be decided by the biggest rockets and that the Soviet Union had them."[221] Later that day, the Pentagon put about 25,000 Air National Guardsmen and 3,000 reservists on notice as a part of the President's plan. These men would operate about 750 airplanes. A Senate panel voted to increase defense appropriations by a billion dollars for bombers as a part of the defense buildup.[222]

On 5 to 7 August, Dean Rusk met with the allied foreign ministers in Paris to develop a negotiating position. Due primarily to de Gaulle's unwillingness to compromise, they failed to come up with anything tangible.

Meanwhile, 30,415 refugees were registered at West Berlin refugee centers in July as Germans began to fear that the border would be secured. Between 1 and 13 August, upwards of 1,500 people a day arrived in refugee centers. These figures did "not take into account the many refugees that never bothered to check into relocation centers. Many had relatives living comfortably in the West and were either housed in West Berlin or flown to West Germany."[223] "Intelligence analysts advised that stringent controls on movement from East Germany into East Berlin were more likely than a physical barrier through the city, which they regarded as too costly to the East German government's prestige."[224] Said Kennedy in a conversation with Walt Rostow in early August, "Khrushchev would have to do something internally to re-establish control over the situation -- and if he did, we would not be able to do a thing about it...it was not a vital interest for the United States."[225]

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[221] *New York Times*, 1 August 1961.

[222] *New York Times*, 2 August 1961.

[223] Grimm, 9.

[224] Richardson, 212.

[225] Ibid.

THE WALL

"The construction of the Wall was approved at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow on 3-5 August, and the operation began on [Sunday,] 13 August, first consisting of barbed wire barriers, followed by the beginning of the Wall a few days later."[226] First there was surprise. Local U.S. military and diplomatic officials slowly realized what was happening and responded in a very conservative way. There was no contingency plan for this. No U.S. officials, in the U.S. or abroad, were expecting this turn of events. Kennedy was in Hyannis Port sailing. There was a quick jerk in Washington followed by a pregnant pause which lasted about a week. At 11:30 a.m. EST, on 13 August, Secretary Rusk reached President Kennedy by phone in Hyannis Port. Wrote Eleanor Lansing Dulles,

> As Rusk outlined the situation, the possibilities of Western action were few. Reports indicated that although the people were excited and even desperate; the police seemed to have the crowds in West Berlin under control. There were no definite signs of an uprising in the East. Advice from the field was sparse even though by now it was late afternoon in Berlin.
>
> After a few questions and answers which seemed to satisfy the President, he is reported to have said, "Go to the ball game as you had planned; I am going sailing."[227]

Kennedy was content that there were no Russian soldiers in the streets of West Berlin and that the movements of the Western allies had not been hindered. What the Administration did not expect was the huge blow to morale of the Berliners.[228]

By 18 August, the morale problem was addressed by the combination of U.S. troops rolling down the Autobahn through East Germany to West Berlin, and the visit of Vice President Johnson and General Lucius Clay. Clay would stay in the city for some time as the

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[226] Richardson, 212.

[227] Dulles, 48.

[228] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1997.

President's personal representative which, although this provided some gain in morale for the West Berliners, diffused the chain of command in the city and frustrated the other U.S. military and civilian officials there.

THE CRISIS SUBSIDES

On 24 August, SNIE 11-10-61, entitled "Soviet Tactics In The Berlin Crisis," was published. This estimate specifically addressed concerns about possible developments within East Germany. The SNIE stated that, "we conclude that the Soviets' present intention probably is not to take further drastic action immediately, though they may undertake measures of limited scope." It went on to say that, "we believe that their present preference is to let the effects of the border closure sink in and see whether the Western Powers have become more inclined to accept Soviet terms of negotiations." The estimate expressed that major eruption in East Germany was unlikely.

On 30 August, the Soviets resumed nuclear testing but in late September, Khrushchev initiated an important private correspondence with Kennedy which would help to reduce tensions this might otherwise have caused. This was especially important because in October, the Soviets would explode a fifty-megaton bomb, the largest ever recorded.

The IC went on to analyze the results of possible U.S. actions in response to a Soviet interference with access to Berlin in additional SNIEs. SNIE 11-10/1-61, published on 5 October, exploited HUMINT from Pentkovskiy regarding Soviet military maneuvers. Pentkovskiy believed that the Soviet leadership might be preparing for a potential "first strike" after signing the threatened separate peace treaty later that month. The IC rejected this HUMINT as improbable.

On 17 October, Khrushchev withdrew the 31 December deadline. Two days later, SNIE 2-6-61 evaluated possible scenarios in which the U.S. might employ nuclear weapons

in response to blocked access to Berlin. The SNIE concluded,

> we think it important to stress that, should substantial hostilities occur over access, this would represent either a major Soviet miscalculation or a major change in Soviet intentions as we have hitherto conceived them. Whereas we presently believe that the Soviets regard the Berlin crisis as within their control, the outbreak of fighting would signify either their failure to manage events in the way they had anticipated or their willingness to accept more substantial risks than we had thought. To the uncertainties flowing from this turn of events would be added the uncertainties of a totally unprecedented situation in which the two nuclear superpowers were engaged in direct military combat.

For the remainder of the year, there were tensions, to be sure, but nothing like the period just before the Wall went up. From October of 1961 to May of 1962, the "crisis reverted to a situation analogous to the early months of 1959 -- a search for agreement among the Western powers on a basis for negotiation."[229] There were strained U.S. relations with France and West Germany. France wanted nuclear independence; Germany was disappointed with U.S. acceptance of the status quo. The negotiations would never reach the point of the exchange of formal proposals. But of course, war never happened.

Wrote Grimm, "the Kennedy administration kept open the doors to negotiation, although it was too late -- the Soviets had already exchanged a pawn for a knight."[230] Said Bobby Kennedy, "I don't think people really understood generally around the country. The President felt strongly, and I did, that we were very close to war at the time."[231]

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[229] Richardson, 213.

[230] Grimm, 32.

[231] Guthman and Shulman, 257.

★ CHAPTER 9 ★

CONCLUSIONS

In late September 1961, Walter Lippmann wrote:

> The Western Powers were caught unprepared to deal with the actual, as distinguished from the supposed, Soviet strategy, which is revealed by the action of August 13. For instead of blockading West Berlin, Khrushchev sealed off East Berlin.
>
> ...the preoccupation of the President's advisers with the memory of Stalin's blockade in 1948 prevented them from preparing adequately for the formidable measures short of war which were available to Khrushchev. The effect of the miscalculation has been far-reaching...[232]

To some degree, President Kennedy simply had to accept the situation in Berlin as it existed when he came to office. However, if we return to the President's own bullfighter analogy from the introduction, or the ship of state analogy, it is apparent where the mantle of responsibility lies for any new U.S. missteps during 1961. Because of weaknesses in the unity of the crisis management team, and inefficiency in the decision making process, the Administration -- through its own doing -- worked harder than it needed to on aspects of the crisis for which it was not adequately prepared. Isolating themselves from the institutional knowledge inherent in the government at the State Department, the CIA, and the Defense Department, Kennedy and his team of intellectuals were nearly overcome by events. It took President Kennedy from the time of his inauguration, until the third week in July to make a decision which he had been advised to make (albeit not in a very forthright way) during the first weeks of his presidency. Fault is not the issue. These are the facts.

If the State and Defense Departments, and the CIA would have been "brought on board" the ship of state instead of routed by the White House staff; or if Kennedy had chosen

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[232] Dulles, 28.

more effective leaders for these Departments to begin with, the President would have been better prepared to make the decisions he needed to make during the first six months of his presidency. The U.S. would have been an initiator, not a reactionary. The risk of miscalculation leading to war would have been lower. One can diffuse the responsibility for errors by focusing on the nature of presidential transition, the pitfalls of politics, or the ultimate lack of war, but the question remains: do we truly want to judge the leaders of our country with, "well, at least he or she didn't do this...or that..."? Perhaps presidential candidates should actually bring something with them to the White House, not make it up after they get there?

We now look briefly at some successes and failures, some unanswered questions, and some universal lessons learned.

SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

Successes.

1) First and foremost, there was no miscalculation which led to war.

2) With that said, there was good analysis available from the very beginning, especially from the Department of State, but Secretary Rusk, among others, did not assimilate and brief the President well on this analysis.

3) HUMINT in the form of Oleg Pentkovskiy and Georgi Bolshakov was very useful. And both the IC and Bobby Kennedy made solid analysis of this HUMINT.

4) Upon ultimate recognition of the gravity of the situation, Kennedy was able to get things organized, assimilate the analysis, and make the decisions necessary regarding defense buildup and negotiations, although it "wasn't pretty."

Failures.

1) The President should have received concise, cogent analysis from his transition team and

staff immediately upon entering office. This should have been available from currently existing sources within the government. The use of outside analysts did not significantly enhance the decision making process, it only served to slow the process down.

2) The President should have known about Operation Chinese Wall, the plan to build a wall through the center of Berlin, closing the border. The IC should have brought this to his attention at the appropriate time and contingency plans should have been made. Ambassador Thompson was ignored when he tried to highlight the refugee problem.

3) The President should have set up an efficient crisis decision making unit earlier.

4) The State Department should have activated the Special Operations Center earlier.

5) Finally, the intelligence analysis and decision making process at the White House was plagued by all of the problems discussed in Chapter 5: communications problems (opaque writing style, information overload), bureaucratic problems (poor professional relationships, overuse of the worst case scenario, administrative incompetence), psychological impediments (cognitive consistency, stress), as well as ideological and political obstacles (selection of appointees for purely political reasons, screening out potentially "disloyal" elements from the presidential analysis process, focus solely upon Khrushchev's Communist agenda instead of local realities in Berlin).

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1) The Intelligence Community (IC). Would better professional intelligence machinery have helped? If Dulles had been replaced from the outset, would the CIA have played a stronger role during the crisis? Would the status quo in Berlin have been different at the end of 1961 if the IC had been "healthier"?

2) The Local Situation in Berlin. If something had been done to control the refugee flow, allay Soviet fears (intelligence exploitation, loss of "talent"), and give the East Germans

hope, would Khrushchev have been compelled to build the Wall? Martin Hillenbrand asserts that it would not have been politically acceptable in the U.S. or in any of our allied partners' countries to have interfered with the refugee flow.[233] Western leaders also believed that it was politically and psychologically helpful to reveal the abuses of the communist system. Perhaps more effort could have been expended in looking for a creative way to stabilize the situation?

3) The Wall. Considering the fact that it led to the decrease of tensions, was the Wall a bad thing? Did the Wall allow politicians to defer the reunification of Germany longer than necessary, further accentuating the economic contrast between East and West, for which we (i.e, the U.S., NATO, Europe, Germany) are paying the price now? (economy, unemployment, EMU, EU, etc.) According to Passavant and Nösser, "Before the Berlin Wall opened on November 9, 1989, hardly anybody believed that the fierce divisions of postwar Germany could be overcome in the foreseeable future."[234]

4) The Kennedy Administration. Is the speed and efficiency of the decision making process important during crises such as this, or is slow and deliberate pursuit of policy always the best approach? Is there such a thing as quick and deliberate? Also, if the Administration had made the same decisions more quickly, would anything have turned out differently?

UNIVERSAL LESSONS LEARNED

Most of the analysis has been done as the paper has progressed. Richardson has expressed what he believed was the didactic value in the crisis:

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[233] Hillenbrand, telephone interview, 14 March 1977.

[234] Oliver Passavant and Gerhard Nösser, "The German Reunification: Legal Implications for Investment in East Germany," in *The Civil Law Tradition: Europe, Latin America, and East Asia*, eds. John Henry Merryman, et. al. (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1994), 553.

> although it was obscured at the time by acrimony over the format and content of negotiations, the Western success in defusing successive deadlines by recourse to exploratory discussions and personal diplomacy, and by placing conditions on the holding of formal conferences, could be seen as a positive 'lesson' of the crisis and a potential precedent for future crisis diplomacy.[235]

In my view, deeper analysis has revealed that the lessons to be learned are much more detailed and practical. The following list reflects many of these universal lessons:

- **Personal relationships** on the crisis management decision making team count. Poor professional interaction hampers information flow to the President.

- **Management style** counts. This is true not just at the White House but at State, Defense and the CIA. If the President (or his trusted advisors for that matter) do not like the job being performed by an appointee, that person should be given new guidance. If the appointee is unable or unwilling to follow that new direction, he or she should be fired. The Administration must not do its own work *and* that of weak departments. In the business world, or in academia, businesses fold or enrollments decrease in quality in the worst case. In the international community, wars begin. In the case of Berlin, the failure of intelligence analysis and the presidential decision making process could have triggered World War III. Making politically-based decisions (personnel or policy) vice insuring the flawless performance of the decision making "team" is unexcusable. Performance should speak louder than politics.

- The **background of analysts** counts. With a high concentration of academics and business people (who had not recently worked in government at the policy level) supplying the analysis from which the President would make life or death decisions, the existence of a convoluted approach to foreign policy making was not surprising, however, neither was it any less reprehensible.

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[235] Richardson, 215.

- **Other crises** in progress count. The continuity of analysis and decision making must always be insured in the midst of distraction.

- **Loyalty *and* candor** are essential. This is so not just on the White House staff, but in all those who interact with the staff. Closely related to this is the need for the succinctness and candor of written analysis. State Department, CIA, or Defense analysis must be tailored for the policy level audience.

- Finally, **personal advocacy** with the President is essential. If all of the above elements occur but the President is "left out of the loop," how can he or she be expected to make the best decisions in a timely manner? It is incumbent upon all who work at the policy level to understand what true loyalty is. As Elbert Hubbard wrote in *A Message to Garcia*, in March 1899: "It is not book learning young men need, nor instruction about this and that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies, do a thing..."[236]

★★★★

[236] Elbert Hubbard, *A Message to Garcia*, in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, ed., Justin Kaplan (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 570.

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